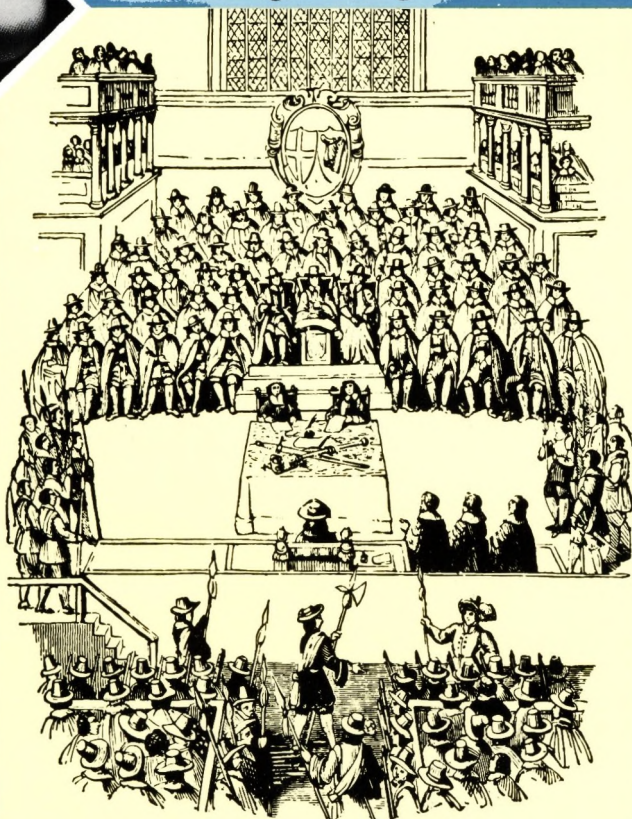


Man Through the Ages



**M.A. Barg**

# **The English Revolution**

**of the 17th Century  
Through Portraits  
of Its Leading Figures**

Progress Publishers

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# **The English Revolution**

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**Progress Publishers  
Moscow**

Translated from the Russian by *Cynthia Carlile*  
Designed by *Vadim Novikov*

**М.А. Барг**

**АНГЛИЙСКАЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ XVII ВЕКА  
В ПОРТРЕТАХ ЕЕ ДЕЯТЕЛЕЙ**

*На английском языке*

© Progress Publishers 1990

*Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*

Б  $\frac{0506000000-360}{014(01)-90}$  15—90

ISBN 5-01-002008-4

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## From the Author

*If in time as in place there were degrees  
of high and low, I verily believe the  
highest of time would be that which  
passed betwix 1640 and 1660.*

Thomas Hobbes

There are landmarks in history which rise above not only the passing years, but even the centuries, landmarks on which is engraved the heroic popular struggle for freedom. One such landmark is the Great English Revolution which occurred in the 17th century.

This was a truly remarkable period in the history of the English people, who enriched the historical experience of the liberation struggle with their revolutionary creativity. Over the centuries to come, social and political thinkers, humanists and democrats drew invaluable lessons from this rich experience of revolutionary thought and action, and not only in England. The great minds of the French enlightenment and Russian enlighteners turned to it, as did the members of the revolutionary Convention and the fathers of the constitution of the United States of America.

The founders of Marxism-Leninism also closely examined and analyzed the events which took place in England in the 17th century. Unlike the high-flown but unrealistic content of the rhetoric of Whig historiographers, their observations and conclusions retain their scientific value to this day. Marx stressed the historical significance of the English revolution of the 17th century, seeing it as the first social revolution 'on a European scale', expressing far more the needs of Europe as a whole at that time than the needs of England herself. This revealed the *typological* meaning of the English revolution of the 1640's within a series of inter-formational social revolutions in modern history. As a result, this revolution was seen to occupy a

very special place both in the structure of the whole transitional period from feudalism to capitalism, and also among the social and political movements taking place in the Europe of the day. It became evident that the English revolution had opened a new era in world history. Proclaiming the principles of a new European society, the English revolution heralded the birth of a new, *bourgeois civilization* now replacing the outdated feudal civilization, and did this in terms that adequately expressed its essence. That is why the principles of this revolution became part of the legacy of bourgeois civilization. Even though it might seem that the political and social institutions and structures in England following the restoration of the Stuart line were identical to those which had existed on the eve of the revolution in 1640, it was nonetheless the revolution which played the decisive role in establishing the new civilization in this country, a civilization which quickly became irreversible, so that twenty-five years later, in 1688-1689, it moved on to the 'second act' of that same bourgeois revolution, now at the intraformational level, aimed at resolving not a general but a purely specific task — that of consolidating *the fact* of the socio-economic victory of the first (inter-formational) social revolution at the political level and formalizing this victory in a constitutional act which recognized the bourgeoisie as the official partner of the landed aristocracy in the new socio-political order in the country.

Indeed, not to see the 'cause and effect' link between the two English revolutions of the 17th century, not to recognize that the 'ease' and 'bloodlessness' of the second — 'The Glorious Revolution' — is explained by the enormous difficulties encountered in the first and decisive revolution, which required heroic effort on the part of all the progressive forces of the nation, and the shedding of a great deal of blood, is to substitute the inherited Whig tradition for the results of research conducted by post-war historians, and in particular by Professor Christopher Hill and his school.

Finally, it would not be out of place to recall that the experience of the English revolution of the 17th century, together with that of the French Revolution, provided the founders of Marxism-Leninism with the factual basis not only for an analytical assessment of European history during the period *when Europe was becoming the leading fac-*

tor in world history, but also for their formulation of the general theory of historical materialism.

In the present book the author has attempted to present the general reader with a comparative biographical study of three of the leading figures in the English revolution—Oliver Cromwell, John Lilburne and Gerrard Winstanley. At the same time, attention is focused not only on the personal lives of each of these men, but also on a more complex task, namely that of presenting through the prism of individual lives, characters and psychology—responses and reactions, emotions and behaviour—the *mentality* of the large social groups to which each of these three belonged, in short, the social psychology of these groups, which itself sheds light on their behaviour during the revolution and the interregnum, which lasted for a total of two decades (1640-1660).

It is clear that the successful handling of such a task presupposes that these three figures left the imprint of their personality, if not on the whole course of events during this period, then on individual stages of the revolution, or at least on one important phase. It also presupposes, as has already been mentioned, that in their manner of thinking and acting, that is, characterologically, they represent quite specific social types of the revolutionary of the period. From this point of view, one can find in the history of 17th century England no figures more representative than Cromwell, Lilburne and Winstanley. Their concepts of the essence of events, the goals of the struggle and the ways and means of achieving them express in most fully developed form the revolutionary outlook of *three different types* of socio-political radicalism during those years: *the aristocratic-bourgeois, the petty-bourgeois and the plebeian-peasant*.

Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct these personalities, to infuse into their historical biographies that note of personal intimacy, if one relies solely on existing documentary data without resorting to 'fictionalized' invention. There is, for example, very little material on the period immediately preceding the emergence of a given figure on the historical scene. Very little material has come down to us which would enable us to enter into their thoughts and feelings, imagine their private lives among family and friends. Moreover, whereas Oliver Cromwell later became only too well-known as a historical figure, at-

tracting the interest of his contemporaries in every period of his life, including the early period—all of which nonetheless remained in many respects 'legendary'—John Lilburne, who spent many years in prison, attracted the attention of memoir writers far less for this very reason, and also because of the nature and aims of his political activity. As for the biography of Winstanley, it is shrouded in the darkness of the unknown, possibly because he was the most unusual and unfathomable of the three. His thoughts and actions quite simply remained beyond the comprehension of those who might otherwise have left us a record. It is not surprising, therefore, that the major part of his life remains unknown to history. Such is the nature of the documentary material which has imposed its conditions on the author, and which the reader must also bear in mind—if, of course, he wishes to learn at least that which is known to history.

## Chapter One

### A PORTRAIT OF THE AGE

It would have been difficult to surprise the Europeans of the 17th century with the news that the subjects of one or other country had risen up in rebellion against their lawful sovereign. They still remembered accounts of the Wars of the Roses in England in the 15th century and, even more clearly, the Huguenot wars in France in the 16th century. The first half of the 17th century was likewise full of similar rebellions. The Fronde in France, for example, was not even a past event but part of the political present. News that a king had died at the hands of known or unknown murderers, be they individual fanatics or hirelings, was also commonplace. The generation to which our heroes belonged could still remember the murder in 1610, on the street and in broad daylight, of the French King Henry IV. Beginning with the 16th century, the voice of the so-called king-fighters resounded ever more loudly as they proclaimed to their readers and listeners their right not only to overthrow a ruler if he became a tyrant, but even, if necessary, to 'shed his blood'. To illustrate we shall cite an essay by John Ponet entitled 'A Short Treatise of Political Power', published in 1556. With references to the Bible and authors of antiquity, the author, previously Bishop of Winchester and a Marian exile, justified the murder of tyrants as a means of opposing unworthy monarchs who had violated the 'agreement with the people'.

Nonetheless the news which spread through Europe at the beginning of 1649, namely that, according to the *sentence* of a court specially convened by 'rebels', the English King Charles I had been *publicly beheaded* in front of a

large crowd, generated horror not only among royalty, but also among their loyal subjects. The shock waves were so great that even the sovereign of distant 'Muscovy', Alexei Mikhailovich, was unable to refrain from expressing his indignation at what had happened in London.

Although anathemas and threats were hurled at the regicides by their 'most Christian' majesties, the events in England were seen in the capitals of Europe as remote, occurring on a distant island and being of no great importance for the political fate of the continental countries. It must be remembered that the 'Great Rebellion' in England coincided with the last period of the Thirty Years' War, and as the English court had remained aloof from this European battlefield, events in England were of little interest to Europe.

As has already been mentioned, until the middle of the 19th century, the events which took place in England in the 1640's were interpreted by historians as being events whose significance was virtually restricted to British history. Only Marx pointed to the European (which by that time already meant world historical) significance of this revolution, which followed the 15th century revolution in the Netherlands in opening the age of the collapse of the feudal-absolutist order. The 'two-act' revolution in England led irreversibly to the formation in Europe of an enclave (region) of early-bourgeois states (England and the Netherlands), thereby transforming the crisis of the old order from a nationally-limited crisis into a general, formational crisis. From then on the victory of bourgeois civilization over the old, feudal civilization was only a matter of time. That is why the victory of the English revolution, in the words of Marx, meant 'the victory of bourgeois ownership over feudal ownership, of nationality over provincialism, of competition over the guild ... of enlightenment over superstition ... of bourgeois law over medieval privileges'.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that such a profound change took place first in England was not, of course, a mere coincidence but was determined primarily by the *characteristic features marking the process of the genesis of capitalism* in that country during the preceding century. The revolution itself, its direct and indirect results, also serve to explain why England became a 'model' capitalist country in the 18th-19th centuries and for more than a century led capitalist transfor-

mation in the world generally, not only as the birthplace of the industrial revolution, but also as the cradle of bourgeois enlightenment. All of this makes the history of the English revolution in the 17th century one of the pivotal topics of historiography.

### WHAT HISTORIANS ARGUE OVER ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC

At first glance it may appear strange that the historians argue over virtually every issue which is even remotely connected with this page of history. One might think that the three and a half centuries which separate us from these events would be sufficient for historiographers to have reached agreement amongst themselves at least on the main points of departure, such as the nature and consequences of the Revolution. Yet historiographic discussions continue, and are so heated that one might think that these were events which those involved in the debates had personally witnessed, or which, at very least, had occurred only recently. What, then, is the reason for several centuries of debate, for this endless discussion? Why is it that events which took place over three hundred years ago refuse to subside into the past for contemporary historians, but continue to agitate them, arousing passions and prejudices which are, to put it mildly, sometimes far from scholarly? In our opinion there is one reason: the 20th century is *the age of revolutionary change in the world*, and the present generation quite literally breathes the atmosphere of these changes, regardless of where they are taking place. It is not surprising, therefore, that the issues involved in any social revolution of modern times are so relevant to contemporary social experience that they become politically controversial questions.

As it is not possible to undertake within this work any detailed analysis either of the historiographical history of this particular subject or of the discussions on it—discussions which, moreover, have become particularly heated in recent years—we will look only at the main conflicting trends and at the solutions put forward as regards the major issues involved in the history of the English revolution.

On reviewing the spectrum of the most recent interpretations of the events which took place in England in the middle of the 17th century, it is not difficult to realize that they centre not so much on the outdated Whig version as on the Marxist concept of this revolution. It is well known that it is precisely in the Marxist interpretation that this revolution is presented as *bourgeois* in terms of the objective historical task which it resolved, and as *democratic* in terms of the role which the lower classes played in achieving victory over the absolutist regime of the first Stuart kings.

In recent English-language literature, it is primarily to Professor Christopher Hill that the credit must go for the historiographical development of this concept. As the result of almost fifty years' research, he has produced a voluminous and detailed investigation into the historiography of 17th century England which has transformed the Marxist interpretation of the mid-17th century revolution from a principle used in organizing the historical material into a comprehensively elaborated and scientifically well-grounded construction on a scale such that even its opponents have recognized it as constituting an invaluable contribution to both national and international historiography on 17th century England. Special mention should be made of the fact that Christopher Hill has resolved what is probably one of the most difficult problems facing Marxist historiography in this area, namely completing that part of the structure which covers the realm of ideas—religious and scientific, social and political, ethical and aesthetic. As a result, he is the first to have systematically formulated the conceptual history of 17th century England in general, and of the English revolution in particular.

It is no surprise, therefore, to find that present-day discussions in English-language historiography on this subject focus directly or indirectly on the work of Christopher Hill and his school, and on the work of those historians who provide it with some measure of objective confirmation (Lawrence Stone, Brian Manning, Derek Hirst and others).

Thus, if we look at the non-Marxist trends in contemporary English-language historiography of the mid-17th century revolution, their typology can be summed up as follows: 1) historians who deny that the events in England in the 1640's had anything in common with what in socio-



logy is meant by the term 'revolution' (Peter Laslett, Ivan Roots, J.R. Jone); 2) historians who deny the bourgeois and, in general, the socio-class or inter-class nature of the conflict, and who, while agreeing to retain the term 'revolution' for these events, or at least for a specific stage, see the essence as lying in the political, constitutional and religious spheres (G.E. Aylmer). Moreover, the majority of these historians deny that the events of the 1640's have any significance for the history of the later Stuarts since, in their view, everything that happened during the interregnum proved easily reversible at the very beginning of the restoration of the lawful monarchy (Hugh Trevor-Roper, Perez Zagorin and others); 3) historians who emphasize in the events of the 1640's not a process radicalizing the ideology and goals of the motive forces of the revolution, finally leading to the execution of the monarch, the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, but a *conservative trend* accompanying this process and allegedly expressing the true spirit of 'the political nation' (J.S. Morrill, David Underdown, Robert Ashton). Finally, there are historians who argue that the reign of the first two Stuarts cannot be interpreted as a prologue to the events of the 1640's, just as they see no grounds for seeing the civil war as resulting from the aims pursued by the Long Parliament during the first, 'constitutional' period of its activity (G.R. Elton, Conrad Russel, Kevin Sharpe).

Taken together, this constitutes a systematically pursued and methodically implemented 'revision' of all those historiographical solutions which to some degree or other favour the Marxist interpretation of events, a 'revision' undertaken for a variety of reasons. One aim is to show that, up to the 1630's, there were no objective historical reasons either in society or in the functioning of national political institutions (parliament) for any contradictions which could be interpreted as a 'prologue to revolution', that is, as precursors of the emergence of something akin to a revolutionary situation in the country. Secondly, the crisis situation which led to the summoning of the Long Parliament is explained by miscalculations on the part of Charles I and his advisors, in particular in their financial and religious policies. However, the discontent which these provoked in no way extended to the monarchical system as such. Thirdly, it is argued that during the first period of its activity, the

Long Parliament, far from opposing the monarch, was seeking to 'free' him from 'poor' advisors and replace them with counsellors from the parliamentary opposition. Fourthly, the 'radicalization' of the loyal majority of the Long Parliament members is described as 'functional', provoked by the actions of the other side. As a result, it is the King and his supporters who are represented as being 'revolutionary', and the Parliament which took up arms against them as 'conservative', defending the 'traditional' constitution. Fifthly, it is asserted that the radical thrust in the events of 1640's did not enjoy widespread support among the population. The question of the role played by the latter in the course of the revolution is either completely ignored or else reversed by pointing to the 'clubmen', one of the specific forms of the peasant movement during the revolution, that is by emphasizing the 'traditionalist' and supposedly socio-conservative position of the mass of the people. Sixthly and finally, just as the historiographic trend in question suggests that the 'Great Rebellion' was not caused by any long-term factors, but was the result of a combination of temporary and accidental circumstances, so its supporters make considerable effort to play down or wholly deny the irreversibility of the consequences of the events of the 1640's, and even their very significance in the subsequent history of society. Such, in general terms, is the essence of the overall revision of the accepted view of the history of England under the early Stuarts which has taken shape in recent years in English-language historiography, a revision which is clearly *neo-conservative*. Although this 'revision' is inspired not only by a 're-interpretation' of already well-known data, but also by a desire to introduce material which has hitherto been insufficiently reflected in both Whig and Marxist historiography of the mid-17th century revolution, nonetheless the clear shift of emphasis (moreover, without this in any way following from or being substantiated by this new material) leads, if this material is read impartially, to the conclusion that *the neo-conservative trend which has clearly come to dominate non-Marxist historiography* is becoming the cognitive prism through which the entire history of 17th century England, up to and including the revolution of 1688-1689, is now viewed. It only remains to point out that, if the influence of ideo-

logy and world outlook burdening the theories of a number of 'revisionist' historians is left to one side, then it must be admitted that, while their research has revealed a number of new aspects to events which already seemed to have been adequately studied, it has *not undermined* either the thesis of the socio-class nature of the conflict in the 1640's, or the conclusion that the economic, social and ideological achievements of this revolution were irreversible and constituted a *cleansing process* enabling England to become, within a short period of time, the cradle of the new bourgeois civilization.

We shall illustrate this proposition with two examples. The 'revisionist' historians—and not only they—do not detect in the England of the late 16th and early 17th centuries any so-called 'new' (in simple terms, 'bourgeois') classes, bearers of the new, capitalist mode of production. They do not see them for the simple reason that they proceed from an abstract concept of these classes, and not from their *historical conditions*, that is, from the concept of classes as viewed in the *process of their emergence* and development and, in particular, from the role of revolution in the social and political consolidation and ideological 'shaping' of these classes. In the period in question, these 'new classes' did not exist in their pure form anywhere in the world, including in England. The elements making up these classes still appeared in the guise of the old estates, as members of town corporations, declassed urban and rural strata, etc., although the politico-economic essence of their economic activity was already fundamentally capitalist. In addition, the new politico-economic essence of the activity of this 'economic man' of the first half of the 17th century, his mentality, and in particular his concept of this activity, *were still far from being directly correlated*. As a result, the new social classes—the middle strata on the one hand, and the people employed in manufacture on the other—constitute during this period what appears to be a multi-coloured mosaic composed of phasally heterogeneous bits and pieces representing class and estate, the privileges and lack of rights, 'freedoms' and obligations, traditional conformism and dissent, in short the intersection, within each of the new classes, of individual and corporative interests, of religious and political convictions, of class membership, estate ethos and local at-

tachments. It is quite obvious that modern historical science still does not possess that algorithm which would enable it to determine within this 'chaos of the emergence' of new classes the relative importance of each of the above-named factors, of interests and aspirations, as regards the aims and the character of the revolution as proclaimed by the Long Parliament and its development to its zenith. Given these circumstances, and also remembering the very *indirect nature of the representation* of the 'bourgeois' in the House of Commons of the time, what can one hope to achieve in the attempt to identify these classes using arithmetical analysis of the composition of this House of Commons, and what role might be played by the results of such calculations in determining the nature of the revolution? It is not surprising that research into the causes of this truly revolutionary explosion is replaced by theories on the possibility that it might have been avoided, arguments pointing to the 'fortuitous nature' of the motives of some, and the 'errors' and 'short-sightedness' of others involved in the events of the period.

A second example. In the majority of cases, the historians who belong to the above-mentioned trends deny the historical significance of the 1640's revolution, declaring it 'a revolution without consequences'. The main reason for such a conclusion, as has already been mentioned, is the *seeming* lack of any change in the property structure in the countryside between 1640 and 1660. Two circumstances, however, are overlooked. Firstly, the English aristocracy was divided into the 'old' and the 'new', with each of these representing, in the politico-economic sense, contrasting social forms—traditional and capitalist—of the economic realization of landed property. Therefore the superficial stability of the landowning structure in the countryside tells us nothing about *the correlation of these two forms in the given structure before and after the revolution*. Indeed, in the course of the English revolution there was no parcelling of major landed estates, and the landowning system was not only left untouched, but was even further consolidated juridically (new research has revealed that historiography had also exaggerated the parcelling of major estates during the French revolution). This was because hegemony in the English revolution at its decisive, bourgeois-demo-

cratic stage was seized by the *independent gentry*, who most fully represented the interests of the 'new classes', which had a profound interest in preserving the *landowning system*. Nonetheless, the changes which actually took place in the economic structure of English land-ownership were sufficiently important, indeed *decisive*, for the face of the village to change radically even in the decades immediately following the restoration, at least in the central, north-eastern and south-eastern parts of England. A comparative study of the manorial records of population and rents for the 1630's and the 1680's shows that a *considerable portion of the middle stratum of peasant-type landholders disappeared*, while the proportion of small and very small-scale landholders increased. What role was played in the process of the *cotter* transformation of the peasant village by the *abolition of the feudal system of land relations* exclusively in favour of the aristocracy (the ordinance of 24 February, 1645-1646), a measure which remained in force after the restoration? What role was played by the land transfers which took place among the landowners as a result of 'voluntary' alienation of landed property? It is a well-known fact that the new purchasers of land (mainly from among the urban 'middle' strata) did not scruple about the means used to expel 'unprofitable' landholders from their newly-acquired land. In our opinion, one need only link together the triumph of the squirearchy at the end of the 17th century and the 'invisible' consequences of the 1640's revolution in order to realize what a *profound impact this revolution had in the history of the English village*. That the general direction of social evolution after 1660 became *clearly bourgeois* is not questioned even by many 'revisionists'.

Does this mean, however, that the historians of the 'new generation' have contributed nothing important to the positive knowledge of this period? Not at all. There can be no doubt that the new facts which they have unearthed have considerably *broadened our field of vision*, have brought to light *new social trends* which, while not leading to any radical reappraisal, have nonetheless rendered *considerably more complex our previous concepts of the period of the 'prologue to revolution'*, and of the nature of the social processes involved, particularly in the *provinces*, during the revolution itself. Taken overall, the fact that a large

group of historians have succeeded in reconstructing a panorama of the revolution in the English counties—even taking into account the limitations of the social groups whose will and actions were reflected in the sources studied—constitutes *a valuable contribution to our understanding of the history of this revolution in general*. Despite the fact that it is difficult to agree with the conclusions that are sometimes drawn, there can be no doubt that, thanks to the work done by the ‘revisionist’ historians, the confraternity of historians has obtained rich material to use in an independent analysis of these newly-discovered phenomena, and that this will undoubtedly assist further research in this area.

## THE ECONOMY OF PRE-REVOLUTIONARY ENGLAND

Two economic orders were operating in pre-revolutionary England—the capitalist and the traditional, essentially feudal and inherited from the Middle Ages. There were, of course, innumerable *intermediate* forms which would, at various times, *complete* their *transition* from the old to the new economic conditions, or at least adapt to them. Taken overall, however, this process belongs to the next chapter in the history of England. Finally, the *importance* of each of these two economic orders in the *various branches of the economy* of pre-revolutionary England *also varied*. Nonetheless, despite all these differences, the dynamism of economic *renewal* came from the *capitalist* order as the one orientated from its outset on *mass* commodity production.

### Industry

As far as industry was concerned, the capitalist order undoubtedly dominated in those spheres which required considerable initial capital investment in the organization of production. Thus, for example, opening a mine in the 17th century cost £1,000; a paper-mill—£2-4,000; an iron foundry—£1,000; a factory manufacturing wire cost £6,000 in 1645. In the 17th century these branches of industry included not only mining, metallurgy and ship-

building, but also the so-called new branches, such as the manufacture of paper, sugar, glass, silk and a number of other commodities. This was not always manufacture in the true sense of the word, that is, with a systematic internal division of labour, but also capitalist co-operation, in which the inevitable concentration of the labour of a large number of workers led to the growth of overall labour productivity. On this basis, pre-revolutionary England achieved noticeable success in a number of branches, particularly in coal mining (over the hundred years between 1540 and 1640 the quantity of coal mined increased from 200 thousand tons to 1.5 million tons), producing three times as much coal as the rest of Europe put together. The high price of wood (as a result of shrinking forests) led to the use of coal not only for domestic heating, but also in industry (the manufacture of paper, glass, refined sugar, etc.). The importance of coal mining in the national economy is summed up by John Cleveland's exclamation: 'Correct your maps: Newcastle is Peru!'. Coal was as precious as silver. The main centres of coal mining, in addition to Newcastle, were the counties of Nottingham, Worcester and Stafford, and also Wales. Cheap water transport made it possible to ship coal over long distances (for example, from Newcastle to London, and even to France).

Similarly, in the hundred years before the revolution, lead, tin, copper and salt mining had increased from six to eightfold. Iron production had tripled. Although these branches of English industry lagged considerably behind those on the continent (and particularly in Germany) from the technical point of view, they had one decisive advantage — an easily available and cheap supply of labour which ensured the profitability of these enterprises. If one remembers that the workforce was counted not in tens but hundreds, then the importance of this factor, that is, of a large market and a cheap labour force, in the success of the new economic order is self-evident.

The picture was quite different as regards the organization of the most important branch of English manufacture — the wool industry — although here, too, there were centralized forms of capitalist manufacture, as is revealed by the well-known description of Jack of Newbury's wool factory in the ballad by Thomas Deloney:

*Within one room being large and long  
 There stood two hundred looms full strong,  
 Two hundred men, the truth is so,  
 Wrought in these looms all in a row.  
 By every one a pretty boy  
 Sat making quilts with mickle joy,  
 And in another place hard by  
 An hundred women merrily  
 Were carding hard with joyful cheer  
 Who singing sat with voices clear.  
 And in a chamber close beside  
 Two hundred maidens did abide  
 In petticoats of stammel red  
 And milk white kerchiefs on their head.  
 These pretty maids did never lin  
 But in that place all day did spin.<sup>2</sup>*

In addition to these, the ballad also refers to 50 shearers, 20 fullers, 40 dyers and 80 songers. This represents capitalist manufacture in the true sense of the word. Such enterprises, which differed from later factories only in that they lacked machinery, were often set up in the buildings of former monasteries. One William Stumpe, for example, rented a former monastery in Malmesbury and Oseney Abbey in Oxford and employed around 2,000 men.

There can be no doubt, however, that the dominant form of capitalist organization in the cloth industry was the kind termed *dispersed* manufacture. Here the capitalist entrepreneur did not construct any production premises and did not acquire any equipment, but simply organized the purchase of raw materials—in this case wool—which was then delivered to various craftsmen for processing. It was not unusual for such an entrepreneur to supply his workers not only with raw materials but also with tools. This form of manufacture does not revolutionize medieval forms of production, but adapts to them, that is, it preserves various degrees of independence among craftsmen, ranging from the cottage worker wholly cut off from the raw materials and sales market, to the more or less independent craftsman. For example, one Thomas Reynolds supplied raw material to 400 spinners, 52 weavers and 33 craftsmen of other trades. Of the three basic cloth producing markets in England in the 17th century—the North, the West and the East—the last two, which manufactured



woollen cloth for export, were dominated by capitalist forms of cottage labour (in the eastern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, fine, dyed cloth was manufactured according to a technology brought over from Flanders and Holland by emigrants). In the western counties (Wiltshire, Gloucester and Somerset) broad, undyed cloth was manufactured. Other kinds of cloth called kersey were produced in the north, in Yorkshire, and were sold mainly on the domestic market. It is worth noting that capitalist cottage labour was practised above all in the countryside, and free from the guild regulations which already governed crafts in the town.

Thus the capitalist order in industry in pre-revolutionary England was represented by capitalist manufacture, both centralized and dispersed, with the latter clearly predominating.

As has already been mentioned, the guild system of urban crafts still survived, and continued—not without the help of the authorities—to defend traditional forms of production. The famous Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices (1563) continued the regulation of the technology of production. It ordered seven years' apprenticeship for all those wishing to learn a craft in the town, forbade more than two lathes under one roof, or the practice of various crafts in one workshop, restricted the number of apprentices employed by one craftsman, etc. Hence the battle waged by the urban corporations against the new centres of manufacture, particularly in the rural districts. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find clear evidence of the guild system internal deformation and disintegration.

In the 17th century, the prosperous elite in the guilds had moved so far apart from the mass of craftsmen that they no longer took any direct part in production, but were wholly engaged in trade, while the ordinary craftsmen were squeezed out of the raw materials and sales market and restricted exclusively to production. The guild elite, known as livery masters (who represented the guild when dealing with the town authorities), soon separated to form livery companies. These were, in effect, merchant companies who subordinated the corresponding craftsmen to their economic power. The cloth merchants brought the weavers under their power, the cutlery merchants—blade and knife makers, blacksmiths, etc. Suffice it to say that of the 12 livery companies in

London, 7 were trade corporations from the very beginning. In provincial towns the transformation of the guilds was slower and less dramatic. Here as well, however, the superficial stability of the traditional order concealed the same trend.

The guild's continuing control over the maintenance of medieval production standards (for example, the length and breadth of a piece of cloth, the number of threads in the warp, the weight of a length of cloth and, finally, insistence on the use of traditional tools) turned the guild system into a major obstacle impeding technical progress in production, the development of non-guild crafts and, with them, of capitalist manufacture.

Even from this extremely brief review of the structure of English industry in the first half of the 17th century, it is not difficult to conclude that the clash between two modes of production—the capitalist and the traditional guild (there can be no doubt as to the existence in the industry of this period of small-scale commodity production (particularly in the north and north-east of the country). However, in the conflict between urban and rural forms of production, the small-scale producers were usually on the side of the latter)—created in this sphere three sources of social tension and conflict: conflict as a result of the inherited relations between the master craftsman, his assistants and the apprentices (within the workshop); conflict between guilds which had seized control over the market and those engaged solely in production; and conflict generated by the capitalist order between the entrepreneurs and the various categories of hired workers (cottage workers, workers at centralized enterprises, etc.).

However, behind these types of socio-class contradictions, types embodying in their classic form contradictions belonging in the first case to the historical past, and in the second to the historical future, we must also discern the *decisive* significance of the third and basic contradiction between the representatives of merchant and entrepreneurial capital, the policy of preserving corporate crafts and 'regulating labour relations' pursued by the first Stuarts on the one hand and, on the other, the policy of monopolies, which drastically curtailed entrepreneurial and market interests on both the domestic and foreign markets.

## Trade

As we have already seen, in the first half of the 17th century financial capital had only begun to transform itself into industrial capital, and therefore the 'manufacturer' of this period is still primarily a merchant. The sphere of commodity circulation was still the only truly *bourgeois*, that is, fully developed economic form. It is not surprising that the industrial application of capital was still seen as the least attractive form of capital investment. It was not without reason that the economists of the day were united in declaring trade 'the basis of state prosperity', the most rapid means of enriching the country—they quite clearly confused money with capital, gold with wealth. These were the representatives of the so-called monetary theory, for whom the creation of treasures was the ultimate purpose of circulation. However many consumer values were produced by the fertile lands and the effort of man—so they taught—the country will not become truly rich if they do not become commodities for other peoples. Only foreign trade (with a trade surplus) is capable of increasing national wealth. Such was the economic theory of the day. And the practice?

We can begin by noting that, by the early 17th century, trade even in regions of the country far removed from London had already spread beyond the confines of local markets and had formed a single national market. London was the embodiment of this national market. By land and sea, from every corner of the country, the products of agriculture, stock-breeding and manufacture were delivered to the capital: some of these goods were for consumption in London itself, others for export overseas. The size of the London corn market is indicated by the following data. In 1530, 150 thousand quarters (28 lb) of wheat were delivered to London; in the middle of the 17th century the capital already required 1,150 quarters. Data from Gloucester (early 17th century) reveal the following: 46.2% of the adult (between 20 and 60 years of age) male population was employed in agriculture; 53.8% were employed in crafts and manufacture. A similar trend existed throughout the country as a whole, insofar as the proportion of the population employed outside agriculture had increased everywhere. If domestic trade, despite market capacity, was slow to develop and failed to draw every re-

gion of the country into national (inter-regional) exchange, this was above all because of the policies of the trade monopolies, and also because of the poor roads, which in many cases meant that goods could only be conveyed in packs. As waterways had not yet acquired national importance due to the lack of a developed system of linking canals, coastal transport was the cheapest. The lion's share of foreign trade was concentrated in London. This is illustrated both by the bitter complaints of other towns, and by the following, more objective data: in the early 17th century, customs duties on goods exported through London amounted to £160,000, while customs duties on goods exported through all the other ports of the kingdom amounted to only £17,000. In 1604 the House of Commons noted that all the cloth manufacturers, and indeed all the merchants of England, were complaining bitterly about the concentration of trade in the hands of the London merchants, to the impoverishment of the rest. However, in London itself foreign trade was concentrated in the hands of no more than 200 people. This situation was encouraged by two factors: the preference which the government displayed towards trade companies, and the monopoly policy already referred to. The trade companies were, of course, far easier to control; they could be made responsible for organizing (at their own expense) the protection of their merchant ships (at sea); members of the titled aristocracy who enjoyed favour at court could be 'invited' to be shareholders, and, finally, they could be supervised (through appointed directors) and, if necessary, financially manipulated by royal charters.

The East India Company, founded in 1600 by royal decree, may serve to illustrate the trade company of the day. It had the exclusive right to import pepper, which could be purchased only from this company. In the same way cotton, for example, could be imported only by members of the Levant Company (1581), who possessed the monopoly on trade with the Mediterranean countries. The brisk trade during the reign of James I in royal letters of patent and licences granting the exclusive right to import particular goods led to monopoly prices ensuring the licence-holders extremely high profits. Very often such letters of patent and licences were granted to members of the court aristocracy, who then, for a share in the profit or in exchange for a large sum of money, handed them over to

leading London merchants. In 1607 the East India Company paid out to its members 500% profit on invested capital. In 1601 and 1612 the more 'modest' Russia Company paid its members 90% profit. Not surprisingly, despite the relatively high initial investment (the initial investment to join the Merchant Adventurers' Company was at one time £200), in 1617 the East India Company had 9,614 shareholders with a joint capital of £1,629,000.

Finally, not only did the trade companies exclude outsiders, mainly the merchants of provincial towns, from profitable overseas trade, but they were dominated by the major shareholders, who took the lion's share of the profit. Thus, for example, although the Merchant Adventurers' Company had 8,590 members, the whole of its trade was concentrated in the hands of no more than 200 merchants. As a result of the monopoly policy, a powerful merchant oligarchy took shape in London whose vast wealth amazed overseas observers. The Venetian ambassador wrote home: the wealth of the citizens of London is very great, and many have amassed a fortune of 100, 150, 200 thousand pounds sterling, while some have amassed more than 500 thousand pounds.

The economic policy of the early Stuarts will be discussed later. Here suffice it to say that the system of trade monopolies revealed the acute contradictions between the requirements of an increasingly dynamic economy and a feudal-absolutist economic policy. Although the Stuarts were not the devisers of this system, which they had inherited from their predecessor on the English throne—Elizabeth I—nonetheless it was during their reign that it became a factor further aggravating those contradictions which led to the formation of a stable parliamentary opposition to the Stuart regime.

### **Rural England**

Mention has already been made of the fact that, at the beginning of the 17th century, England was an agrarian country, with agriculture heavily preponderant over industry, the countryside over the town. Even in the second half of the 17th century, William Petty divided surplus value only into two forms: land rent and interest, the second, moreover, being derived from the first. It would be a serious mistake, however, to assume on that basis that England

was moving only very slowly along the capitalist path. On the contrary, the main feature of the socio-economic development of England during the century prior to the revolution, the very feature which clearly distinguished her from the other European countries, was that the disintegration of the medieval economic order began earlier in the countryside than in the town, and occurred *in a truly revolutionary manner*. The reason for this was that English agriculture, which had long been linked not only to the domestic, but also to the foreign market (primarily through the export of wool), attracted capital investment long before industry and became a sphere of the capitalist type of economy. Of 67 tenant farms in the 16th century, studied by the English scholar R.H. Tawney, 37 were large-scale holdings (of these 33 had 155 to 200 acres of arable land, and 4, 700 to 900 acres); 24 farms were middle-scale (from 50 to 200 acres), and only 6 farms were peasant-type small-holdings (less than 50 acres). We are still too poorly informed on the economic conditions of the functioning of leased holdings to draw clear boundaries between these groups.

It was, however, precisely for this reason that, from 1540 to 1640, the English countryside proved to be the *focal point of the most acute social conflict* in the country. The sides involved in this conflict were the landowners and large-scale, entrepreneurial land-leasers, both alike hostile (although for different reasons) to the traditional agrarian order and, therefore, to the class of small-scale farmers, the bearers of this order. Having only just obtained personal freedom at the end of the 15th century, the core of this class, the so-termed copyholders, immediately found themselves between the hammer and the anvil, trapped between the desire of the landowners to evict them from the land as impeding its more profitable exploitation, and the willingness of 'moneyed people' to lease this land on new, commercial terms. The name copyholders was given to landholders on manorial estates who paid an annual rent and fines (dues) on receiving their tenancy, the level of which was, *officially*, regulated by manorial custom—hence the term 'customary tenants'. In reality, however, they were *powerless to oppose the lord of the manor* if he decided to ignore the customs and alter the conditions of tenancy to his benefit. The crown courts, termed common law courts, did not accept complaints from copyholders in such cases and did not examine the case.

In short, the English village illustrated in classic form the temporal sequence of and close link between two processes—the loss of land by the peasants (the basis of the so-called initial accumulation in the countryside) on the one hand, and, on the other, the genesis of the capitalist order in agriculture, the conversion of the countryside into a breeding-ground of large-scale entrepreneurial land-leasing.

The rise in prices, in particular for agricultural produce, led in the pre-revolutionary countryside to a situation of acute land hunger. In the 1530's, an acre of land brought 5-6 pence rent. A hundred years later (in the 1630's) the market rent for one acre was 4-5 shillings, that is, its annual 'value' had increased 8-10 fold. The high market value of land stimulated the introduction of agrotechnical innovations whose aim was to increase land productivity. Naturally, this process of 'melioration' involved primarily the large farms.

In the first half of the 17th century the practice of fertilizing the soil with lime, sea silt and peat began to spread; seedling grasses (clover), root crops (turnips, carrots), oil-bearing plants (rape, cole-seed), dye plants (safron), flax and hemp were introduced. Melioration was carried out on a wide scale, above all the draining of the great level of fens.

In pre-revolutionary England, in comparison to the beginning of the 16th century, the yield of cereals had increased considerably; on average it had doubled. All the evidence cited above of a definite intensification of agriculture was, however, ambivalent at the social level. As these various forms of improvement required considerable outlay, they were available only to the manorial lords and the prosperous rural elite, while the copyholders (and short-term rent-paying tenants), insecure in their title of ownership, naturally hesitated to undertake such expenditure, and the poor section of landholders were simply unable to afford it. Copyhold was usually for a period of 21 years. Whether or not the lord of the manor would agree to renew the copyhold on the same terms became known only at the expiry of this period. It is clear that the preservation of the power of the landowners over the holdings of the bulk of the peasant farmers, and above all those of copyholders, prevented the agricultural revolution from spreading outwards.

Meanwhile, the social prerequisites of such a revolution were being created (objectively and subjectively) by the combined efforts of the entrepreneurial landowners and the urban rich. In the given circumstances, however, they were inimical to the fundamental interests of the peasantry as a class. The revival of the land market, for example, had a negative effect on the stability of the title of ownership of the peasant-type copyholders, for it turned whole manorial estates and their parts into a market item. The new landowners, who had acquired this land for cash, were, of course, less inclined to take account of the traditions 'held from time immemorial' in their relations with the sitting tenants. Research by the English historian R.H. Tawney has shown that, of 2,500 manors situated in 7 counties, one in three was sold during the period from 1561 to 1600. Between 1601 and 1640 change in ownership was even more common. Although huge tracts of land came into the possession of the crown as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries, the crown held less land in 1603 than it had in 1500. Land was sold by the crown, by impoverished aristocrats and members of the gentry. Between 1558 and 1602, in the 12 counties of the Midlands, the nobility sold 28% of their manorial estates. Although the number of peers doubled between 1558 and 1642, by 1642 they held less land than in 1558. The purchasers came from various classes.

Crown land and manorial estates were purchased not only by members of the middle gentry who had grown wealthy, but also by the urban wealthy, above all from London, from among the so-called free professions and the wealthy craftsmen. In 1625 the city of London, the main creditor of the crown, was granted crown land to the value of £216,310.

Along with the weakening of 'the law of custom' (tradition) in regulating the duration of copyhold tenure, the active land market promoted the concentration of landholdings within the manorial estate, including among peasant landholders. The number of copyholders whose tenure was in perpetuity was extremely small and restricted mainly to the east and south-east of the country. Complaints against the greed of those who collected several landholdings into their own hands could be heard in England from the 16th century onwards. The result of such a process could only be a fall in the number of landholders,



and an increase in the size of landholdings. In the manor of Tuggal (North), the 11 individual farms, 12 cotters and 1 blacksmith recorded in 1567 had been replaced by the end of the century by just 8 farms. In the manor of Brixton-Deverell (Wilts), 3 tenants with 26 horses had replaced 6 tenants with 47 horses. As a result of the mobilization of land within the manors and the consequent land hunger among the tenant strata, a system of subholding and subrenting emerged. Landowners found it more to their advantage to rent out part of their land as a subholding or a subtenure than to work it themselves, so high were the land rents. However, the very fact that this was possible indicates the number of villagers whose manorial holding was inadequate and who agreed to be subtenants of other landholders.

Another important factor undermining the position of the peasantry in the agrarian order in pre-revolutionary England was the desire of the landowners to regulate land-ownership relations on the basis of the market. As a result of rising prices for agricultural products, the wealthy, both from the towns and from among the local residents, were literally besieging the countryside in the hope of leasing not only individual holdings, but part (and sometimes the whole) of a manorial estate. They were not deterred by the market-determined high rents since, if the agreements were long-term, they would undoubtedly profit while the price of agricultural products continued to rise. Thus there emerged a stratum of large-scale leaseholders representing the entrepreneurial element in the 17th century English village. It is obvious that for the bulk of the traditional landholders this meant a massive escalation in rent dues. As had already been mentioned, it was the 'fixed period' copyholder who found himself in the most critical position.

Although some estimates put the amount of cultivated land under freehold at two thirds, and the amount under copyhold at one third, this does not mean that there was a similar proportion of freeholders and copyholders among the peasants. On most of the manorial estates across the country, the land under freehold did not belong to those who worked it, and if it was rented to those who did cultivate it, it was not rented as freehold. Taken overall, there are grounds for assuming that the majority of the small-scale farmers in the north-west, south-west and parts of

the midland counties were copyholders. In the counties of the east and north-east of England the proportion of freeholders was double that in other regions of the country, yet even here it was less than the number of copyholders.

In general, one could say that *the fate of the peasant copyholder reflected the fate of the English peasantry as a class*, since the majority of copyhold tenures were not hereditary and on fixed terms—such was the status of the hereditary copyhold and, of course, freehold. In law, the copyholder was classed among the landless. Under common law, it was the landowner who had rented out the land to the copyholder who remained the owner of the land. When the copyhold tenure expired, the landowner had the right to change the conditions or, if they remained unchanged, to compensate himself for 'loss' (due to the fact that the customary rents were lower than the market rents) by demanding a fine of entrance, as a rule equal to the average annual rent. In as much as the traditional copyhold conditions were now in sharp contradiction to the market possibilities opening up before the landowner, a battle for land and rent began in the English countryside whose outcome is revealed in the following data.

In eastern England, land rent increased sixfold during the 16th century; in the manors of Wiltshire it increased tenfold between 1510 and 1650; in Yorkshire it tripled (between 1556 and 1613), and again tripled between 1613 and 1648; in Nottinghamshire it increased sixfold during the 16th century. The rent income of the Petre estates (Essex) totalled: in 1572—£1,400, in 1595—£2,450, in 1640—£4,200. The income from the Yorkshire manors of the Saviles increased by 400% between 1613 and 1651; the rent of Staneleigh manor (Yorkshire) was £418 in 1599, and £1,440 in 1640.

The increase in the fines of entrance over the same period is no less eloquent. From 1554 to 1557 fines of entrance in the manor of Brownham brought the lord a sum of £256.8. By the beginning of the 17th century this sum had almost tripled. The fines paid by copyholders on crown lands were ten times higher in 1614-1615 than what had been charged over previous years. In 1607, copyholders in Whitley manor (Nottinghamshire) complained that the fines of entrance had increased by 4500% in comparison to the traditional fines. Not surprisingly, many copyholders in pre-revolutionary England were obliged to 'vol-

untarily' renounce their copyhold and agree to rent. Finally, the copyholders were still subject to various dues dating back to the former system of serfdom. Such dues included the heriot (a death tax), panages paid for the use of grazing land, tallage, and various forms of 'assistance' to the lord. Payments in kind, and even periodic labour dues (corvée) were also quite common.

Thus *copyhold was the most exploited and least legally protected form of peasant landholding in pre-revolutionary England*. The early irruption of capitalist relations into the English countryside placed the majority of the peasants (copyholders), who had not had time to secure their right of ownership of their holding, in a critical position. This is shown by the reduction in the manors of the share of peasant copyhold and the increase in leased land (leasehold). In three of the eight inherited manors in Gloucestershire, for example, the income from rent was composed entirely of leasehold payments, while in the five other manors leasehold payments accounted for half of the rent income. The extent to which leasehold had penetrated into the manors of Somerset is revealed by the following complaint made by the copyholders of Hattspill manor: here there were once 60 ploughs, but now (the reign of James I) there are only 23 inasmuch as the greater part of the land of the parish ... is leased to 'divers outdwellers'. From the parish of Titenhull comes the complaint that formerly there had been 16 ploughs, but now there are only 6, inasmuch as land to a value of £800 has been leased to 'outdwellers'. In the parish of Kingston, 2,000 of the 2,700 acres of land was leased by outdwellers. The second half of the 16th century might justifiably be termed the 'golden age' of entrepreneurial leasing in England. As the rent in the majority of cases was paid according to an agreement concluded before the beginning of the active phase in the price revolution in England, while agricultural products were fetching far higher prices than before, the income from rent was higher than the profit from other forms of entrepreneurial activity. Taken overall, it is difficult to say how much copyhold land was thus removed from peasant owners on the eve of the revolution, but there can be no doubt that it constituted a large amount of the total.

The most radical change in the traditional order of agrarian relations in England, however, was the notorious land enclosure of the 16th and 17th centuries. This enclo-

sure of common land was, above all, a means by which the lords of the manor rid their land of the traditional landholders who, in the new conditions, had become economically unprofitable. Although the champions of enclosure based their arguments on 'the common weal', the real reason was the desire of the landowners to *secure a monopoly* on landownership and have unrestricted right of exploitation to their own benefit.

The prologue of the agrarian revolution, which began under Henry VII, had led to the issuing of the first statute against the depopulation of the countryside (1488-1489). However, as the implementation of this and other similar statutes was in the hands of those enclosing the land, Henry VII's legislation 'in defence of the peasants' proved very ineffective. Land enclosure continued almost uninterrupted throughout the whole of the 16th century. This is revealed by the very chronology of the corresponding statutes and proclamations officially directed against such enclosure: 1515, 1526, 1536, 1549, 1590. In the last years of the reign of Elizabeth I and during the reign of James I, there was a new wave of enclosures. Government investigations revealed that during the decade from 1597 to 1607 the amount of land enclosed amounted to 40% of all the enclosures over the preceding 50 years. In counties like Yorkshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Gloucestershire, the loss of land among the peasants was such that many villages disappeared altogether. An even greater number were depopulated as a result of enclosures and enlarging of farms. Thousands upon thousands of peasants moving from place to place in search of a holding became vagabonds. The revolt which flared up in the midlands in 1607 was an expression of the despair of the landless, a protest against the oppression to which they were subjected. The insurgents told the London judges who went out to meet them that they had gathered with the purpose of destroying the recently erected fences which had turned them into paupers dying of want. However, even after the suppression of this rebellion, enclosure continued. The company for the drainage of fens (in the eastern counties) threatened thousands of communal land users who lived in the Wash, pastured cattle there, fished, hunted and were employed in crafts. Similarly, the traditional right of those with little or no land of

their own to use the so-called royal woods was threatened by both the deforestation, and by private ownership.

The renewal under the first Stuarts of legislation 'against depopulation' became nothing more than a means of extracting fines from those who violated it, for the payment of fines was, in effect, a way of *legalizing* the enclosures. Evidence of this is the large number of large-scale enclosures recorded in Chancery documents between 1630 and 1650.

Thus we can see that the contradictions which had accumulated in the pre-revolutionary countryside were so sharp that, at the first signs of a political crisis (a crisis of the ruling classes), this combustible material would inevitably explode and provoke a massive wave of popular movements.

## PRE-REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY

The social structure of society in pre-revolutionary England was marked by a surprising mixture of people from diverse social classes and estates, particularly at the level of the prosperous strata of society. Such a situation is characteristic of a period when the officially recognized juridical classification of statuses enters into contradiction with social practice, as a result of which, in everyday life, the second is obscured by the principles of the first. Consequently, the complexity of the social structure during the period in question lies not only in the diversity of socio-legal status, but in the deceptive nature of this official status insofar as the traditional system of estates everywhere served to conceal the fact that the socio-class position of those thus classified was in total contradiction with their official status.

It is only at the top of the officially recognized social hierarchy, occupied by the titled aristocracy, and at the opposite end of that hierarchy, occupied by those strata outside the official 'body politic', that the traditional division still largely retained its meaning and identifiable boundaries. Insofar as one is speaking of those estates which fell between these two groups, the boundaries between them had been blurred by the impact of opposing

processes—the *disintegration* of the hereditary social classes and the emergence of new classes.

In his 'Description of Britaine' (1587), William Harrison depicted the social structure of his contemporary society as follows: 'We in England divide our people commonlie\* into four sorts'. Of the four 'degrees of people', the first consisted of gentlemen (the titular nobility, knights, esquires and those simply called 'gentlemen'); the second consisted of the citizens and burgesses (members of city corporations, house-owners, tax-payers); the third consisted of yeomen (freeholders of land to the value of 40s a year, farmers to gentlemen, and possessing 'a certain preeminence and more estimation'); and finally the fourth group—day labourers, poor husbandmen, artificers and servants, people who had 'neither voice nor authorities in the common wealthe, but are to be ruled and not to rule others'. Judging by this 'Description', it is not difficult to conclude that, in the first place, *only* the first three estates ('sorts') were included in the officially recognized 'people of England', though in terms of number these three groups constituted only *one tenth* of the adult male population. In other words, the 'fourth sort' included those *nine tenths* of the adult male population who were without the right to take part in the election of parliamentary candidates. It is clear that the principle by which people of this 'sort' were distinguished from the next, 'third sort', was that of property (the size and juridical nature of freehold land-ownership). Secondly, even in determining the status of 'nobleman', the principle 'by birth' ('noble blood') was obscured in practice by promotion to the knighthood for services to the king. Moreover, under James I there was widespread sale of noble titles, up to and including the title of the top aristocracy (a fact used by many of the wealthy lacking 'noble blood'). Thus, one way or another, the property principle, educational qualifications, profession and simply the material position of the individual—in short, the lifestyle of a gentleman (which excluded physical labour)—were sufficient for public opinion to call a given individual a 'gentleman'.

One of the characteristic features of English society in this period is the degree of social mobility, the move up-

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\* The spelling of the original is retained in some quotations. —Ed

wards from the 'middle classes' to the nobility. For people belonging to the 'fourth sort' it was, of course, impossible to change social status. In 1600 Sir Thomas Wilson attempted to depict the social structure of English society. The main difference between his description and that of Harrison is the division of the English aristocracy into two groups, the 'nobiles majores' and the 'nobiles minores'. The first included the titled nobility with the inherited right to sit in the House of Lords (peers)—duke, earl, marquis, viscount, baron. The aristocracy of England in the 17th century could not boast of ancient lineage. In the majority of cases they belonged to the new aristocracy created either under the Tudors, or even under the Stuarts. The first Parliament of Henry VII was attended by 29 lords temporal. What the Wars of the Roses had not achieved was completed by the Tudors, who finally destroyed their opponents. In the Parliament of 1519 there remained only 19 lords temporal. Later, under Elizabeth I, their number was increased to 61, and under James I—to 91. By 1642 more than half of the members of the House of Lords had received their titles after 1603. As for the landed property owned by the peers, this can be judged by the following figures: the annual value of the estates of 61 royalist peers was £1,241,906, that is, on average £30 thousand each. Only 16 peers had an income higher than this, while the income of many was much less. The estates of the Earl of Marlborough, for example, brought in £340 per annum. The impoverishment of a considerable portion of the aristocracy was the result of their continuing to live according to the old feudal order. In 1642, the peers who supported the king borrowed around £2 million from London financiers. If they did not enjoy the favour of the king, this led inevitably to the sale of a large part of their estates.

Among the titled aristocracy, however, there were a few enterprising nobles who combined the receipt of land rent with entrepreneurial profit (sometimes only a part of this profit in the form of payment for selling their rights to an entrepreneur). The Earl of Newcastle, for example, owned coal mines and iron foundries on the river Tyne; the Earl of Shrewbury not only ran his estates on a commercial basis, but was also reputed to be one of the leading 'industrialists' of his day (coal, timber, lead, etc.); the Earl of Bedford headed the company for the drainage of fens, and

had invested £100 thousand into this enterprise; the Earl of Warwick headed the Guinea Company, having received the patent in 1618. Finally, was it not typical of the spirit of the age that among the members of the East India Company there were 15 dukes and earls, 13 duchesses and other titled ladies, and 82 holders of various orders? In such cases, of course, those members of the aristocracy who embellished their titles with commercial and industrial undertakings and shared in profits which were often of a rather questionable nature, both legally and morally, maintained their noble way of life by very far from noble means. In this, however, the English aristocracy of the 17th century differed little from the aristocracy in other European countries.

Nonetheless, as regards the top nobility as a whole, and in particular that part which did not bask in the attention of the court and showed no inclination to change the political economy of a feudal baron for the economic science of the entrepreneur, the main economic trend in the first half of the 17th century was decline and impoverishment. This is also illustrated by the frequent instances of impoverished aristocrats seeking to right their fortunes by means of the dowry brought by a merchant's daughter. Lord Compton, for example, married the daughter of the Mayor of London, John Spencer, who had left £300 thousand in his will.

However, the most notable feature of the social structure of England during the reign of the first Stuarts is, as has already been mentioned, *the division of the noble estate into two social classes antagonistic to each other in many respects—the so-called 'old' and 'new' aristocracy*. This discrepancy between class and social estate boundaries, insofar as we are talking of the aristocracy, gave the 1640 revolution its unique character, and determined both the nature of that revolution and its end result.

The above explains the importance for historical science of the question of the social nature of the new aristocracy. Although some elements of this class could be found in the 15th century, the new aristocracy as a social class was a product of the 16th century, as was the bourgeoisie (including the capitalist farmers). It is all the easier to recognize this fundamental fact if one notes that time and again the 'social material' for the creation of this class came not from the descendants of the 14th and 15th cen-



ture barons, but from representatives of financial capital accumulated outside the countryside and used, among other things, to acquire landed property. Shortly after the dissolution of the monasteries, the crown began to sell church property. That, moreover, explains why it was that, for a considerable section (if not the majority) of the 'new aristocrats', the counter-reformation represented a threat which did not disappear from the English horizon up to the revolution, menacing the very *basis of their aristocratic status and social prosperity*. It is not surprising that the protestant fervour of the new aristocrats was a direct expression of their social self-awareness and interest.

Thus the new aristocracy was, in the politico-economic sense, that section of the aristocracy which had actively adapted agriculture to the needs of the capitalist order in agricultural production. Such adaptation could assume two forms: either the landowner, having cleared his land of traditional peasant holders, leased it out to an entrepreneur at a *market* rent, or else he himself operated as such an entrepreneur, collecting both the land rent and entrepreneurial profit. Often we meet the 'new aristocrat' in the guise of a major leaseholder (or even a major copyholder) in a neighbouring manor. However, this aristocrat does not limit his economic activity to agriculture. He is also to be found in commerce as the promoter of overseas expeditions, as a member of a trading company, as a ship-owner and industrialist. He is a man of the free professions—a lawyer, a solicitor, a land surveyor, etc. In short, the new aristocrat is a social hybrid of the landowner and the entrepreneur. We do not know the relative share of these various sources—rent, entrepreneurial profit, interest on loans or the 'bonuses' of his professional occupation—in his total income. One thing only is clear—an aristocrat by social estate, he had none of that estate's prejudices as regards the nature of his various forms of income.

The history of industry and trade in the England of this period is indeed not the work of the bourgeoisie alone; to a large extent it was the work of the new aristocracy. Thus we use the term 'the new aristocracy' to avoid the term 'the bourgeoisified aristocracy'. In order to maintain their prestige as gentlemen, the new aristocrats became (or rather, did not cease to be) merchants and traders; while being officially 'knights of the sword', they became 'knights of profit'. In a word, if social prestige was still secured,

even in the new conditions, by landownership, the style of life definitely depended on the degree of 'disregard for social status' when it came to income.

It is not surprising that social mobility in pre-revolutionary society was most clearly manifest among the middle and lower ranks of the aristocracy on the one hand, and among the middle section of the urban bourgeoisie on the other. There was considerable 'diffusion' between these two classes. Mixed marriages here were nothing unusual, particularly in families of the gentry, where bourgeois origins had still not been forgotten. The practice among the gentry of sending younger sons as apprentices to members of trade corporations is known to have been widespread in the England of the early Stuarts. After completing the seven years' apprenticeship, they became full members of these corporations. Thus, for example, of the 125 apprentices to members of the Company of Merchant Adventurers in Newcastle (between 1625 and 1635), 42 were sons of yeomen, and 40—sons of gentlemen. Of 8 thousand apprentices in London companies (between 1570 and 1641), 12.6% were the sons of knights, squires and gentlemen. In the richest of these companies, where there was no manual labour, the proportion of apprentices from 'noble' families ranged from between one quarter to one third of the total.

There is no need here to undertake a detailed examination of a problem which remained unresolved even during the famous discussion known as 'The Rise of the Gentry', namely, which section of the nobility, both upper and lower, went into decline during this period, and which, on the contrary, enjoyed prosperity. This discussion, which began on the basis of facts cited by the English historians Tawney and Trevor-Roper, was so called after the title of Tawney's main work: 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640' (*Economic History Review*, Vol. XI, No 6, 1941). Unfortunately, surviving documents contain no reliable evidence which could provide the long-sought answer to this question. For our purposes it is sufficient to note the unquestionable rise in the collective wealth of the gentry. Constituting a negligible proportion of the population—around 2% (together with their families)—the gentry controlled the lion's share of the national wealth, owning in the mid-17th century 50% of the cultivated land (a further 15% was owned by peers).

On the basis of the above-cited facts we can fully understand Marx's assessment of the role of the new aristocracy in the 17th century revolution. 'The riddle of the conservatism of the English Revolution, is the persisting alliance of the bourgeoisie with the majority of the big landowners, an alliance that distinguishes the English Revolution essentially from the French... This class of big landowners allied with the bourgeoisie ... found itself not in contradiction with the conditions of existence of the bourgeoisie as did French landed property in 1789, but, on the contrary, in perfect harmony with them.'<sup>3</sup>

The social structure of the urban population has been very inadequately studied. Here the main line of division passes between the full members of corporations, freemen, and ordinary house-owners, below whom came only those living in rented accommodation. These last were composed mainly of assistants to master craftsmen, apprentices and servants. As the distinguishing feature of corporations in English towns was that both the producers of a given commodity and those who traded in it belonged to one and the same corporation, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to establish the necessary statistics. The archives of the city of Worcester, for example, enable us to say only that between 1600 and 1649 over 100 different professions were practised here. One can only guess the distribution of these professions among the city population.

As for the social structure of the rural population, here, leaving aside gentlemen, it was the *yeomen* who were at the summit of the social hierarchy. They were landowners, although not all landowners attained the status of yeoman. Yeomen, in the eyes of their contemporaries, were farmers with large farms, usually freehold (although there were many instances of prosperous copyholders and leaseholders being termed 'yeomen'), and with an income of no less than 40s per annum. However, the yeomen were also divided into upper and lower. The upper yeomanry constituted the rural oligarchy governing all the business of the parish and the community. According to Mildred Campbell, this section of the yeomanry was much closer to the gentry in terms of income than to farmers in the proper sense of the term. Their annual income could reach £100-200. The income of yeoman Robert Loder

(Berkshire) for the year 1613, for example, was £185.15s, excluding expenditure on food for his family and servants.

Even those who belonged to the lower yeomanry had an average annual income of £40-50. According to Sir Thomas Wilson (1600), there were 10 thousand yeomen in England with an income of £300-500, and 80 thousand freeholders with 5-8 dairy cows and 5-6 horses.

Below the yeomen on the hierarchical ladder of the rural population came those termed 'husbandmen', the independent farmers, whose position in terms of property was incomparably more diverse than among the yeomanry. If one takes a husbandman with a holding of 30 acres as the standard, then at the beginning of the 17th century he could count on an income of £14-15, excluding the modest support of a family of six (parents and four children), in a year of normal harvest. According to calculations by Peter Bowden, he would have around £3-4 a year to spend on other needs.

A comparison of a holder of any English manor with this 'standard' peasant-type landholder during the period in question proves that the majority were barely able to make ends meet, as they had holdings ranging from one half to one sixth of 30 acres. Here, for example, is the differentiation of peasants in the manor of Barrow (Lincolnshire) in 1649:

14 landholders with holdings of 50-100 acres accounted for 87.2% of the total manorial land;

3 landholders with holdings of 25-50 acres accounted for 10.3%;

3 landholders with holdings of 3-25 acres accounted for 1.6%;

41 landholders with holdings of less than 3 acres accounted for 0.9%

In other words, only 28% of the landholders of this manor could be considered relatively prosperous. The vast majority—72% of the total—had to earn part or the whole of their basic income elsewhere.

In the manor of Willingham (Cambridgeshire) in 1603 the situation was even more typical; only one landholder had a holding of 59 acres; 48 landholders had holdings of between 5 and 38 acres; 67 house-owners were completely without land.

An important feature of the property-related social structure of the English peasantry was that the lower the

landholder found himself on the ladder of property ownership, the greater the role played in his life by the legal status of his holding, that is the difference between freehold, which provided legal protection against a change in the conditions of tenure, and copyhold, which lacked any such protection.

The large numbers of the rural population with little or no land testifies not so much to land hunger resulting from the pressure on resources of a growing population as to the scale of expropriation of traditional landholders by any and every means. Not unnaturally, the enclosure of common pasture, as has already been noted, affected above all the interests of those with little or no land of their own. (In the manor of Nassington (the north), for example, there were 55 cotters, each of whom was allowed to keep 3 cows and 10 sheep on common pasture.) They lost the most important prop to their rural existence—communal rights. Nonetheless, it was regulation of the employment question which was of decisive importance in shaping the social character of this section of the population. The acuteness of the employment problem in England under the early Stuarts is revealed by the protocols of local magistrates. Whereas in industrial regions of the country this was a major factor in the spread of capitalist manufacture, in the rural areas only an insignificant proportion of this section of the population was able to find a place as a permanent or seasonal servant within the boundaries of their manor. The majority were obliged to journey from village to village in search of such employment.

The position of this large section of working people in pre-revolutionary England is shown by a description of the property of one John Smith, a cotter from Pittington. His total property was valued at £2.10s.8p. His cottage contained no bed, and he ate from a simple board table. His kitchen utensils were made of wood, his clothing old, and the only livestock in his yard were two hens and a few chickens. For comparison we shall note that the property of Pollen Parker from Singleton (Durham) on his death was valued at £74.8s, in addition to £60 in cash.

Elizabethan legislation, which obliged the manor lords to supply each newly-built cottage with four acres of arable land, was totally ignored. In the race for rent, the lords of the manor closed their eyes to the fact that tens and hundreds of 'landless' cottages were being built on

waste land beyond the village boundary. A large number of such shacks, termed 'cottages', appeared on waste land in those regions where grazing was the dominant form of agriculture, and in industrial regions, particularly the cloth manufacturing areas—in the Wild Forest (Gloucestershire), in Wiltshire and Somersetshire. A contemporary researcher has estimated that two thirds of the day labourers owned only shacks. For this huge section of the rural population, the possibility of finding regular work was a matter of life and death. However, given the fact that supply far outstripped demand on the labour market, wages fell far below the level of value of the consumer goods then being produced in the countryside. According to figures provided by Bowden, a day labourer with regular employment could earn a maximum of £10.8s in one year. According to other data, this figure was only £9 a year. However, even in a year of normal harvest, in order to keep a family at a level above starvation, and also pay the rent for the cottage, an income of no less than £11-14 was needed. In order to survive, all the members of a landless day labourer had to work from childhood. If one also takes into account that regularly employed 'labouring poor' constituted the minority among this section of the population, then it is clear that the line dividing such a 'poor man' from a pauper was in fact very blurred.

According to one contemporary witness (1622), 'the labouring poor' of London rise at dawn and work tirelessly the whole day, which continues until late in the evening, and nonetheless 'they are barely able to purchase bread at the end of the week, or clothes to replace those worn out at the end of the year'.

Although, officially, sessions of the local magistrates were to establish each year a measure of correspondence between the wages of hired labourers and the market price of bread, wages stayed unchanged for many years. In Devonshire, for example, wages remained unaltered throughout the whole of the first half of the 16th century, while the price of wheat tripled over the same period. The statute issued in the fifth year of the reign of Elizabeth I required an annual review of wages. In Yorkshire the wages of hired labourers in 1685 were lower than in 1594, while the price of food over this period had increased five-fold. The local magistrates were above all concerned to ensure that the employers did not pay the hired labourers

more than the established rates of pay. The orders of the local magistrates of Devonshire declared that all constables should ascertain the names of those masters and workers who gave and received wages higher than the established rate and inform the justices of the peace. The rates of pay thus established covered only the wages of hired labourers whose professions were inherited from the Middle Ages, and although James I extended the Elizabethan system of regulation to include workers in all other professions, that is, in the new manufactures, the wages remained unchanged.

In such a situation, what was the position of those many thousands of poor who did not have regular employment and were either pariahs in their own parish, or vagabonds driven by want to wander the country? The scale of pauperism afflicting society on the eve of the revolution in England is illustrated by the following facts. In the one parish of Somerton (Somersetshire), the local authorities counted 300 paupers. In 1630 it was calculated that the number of paupers supported by the parish had tripled since 1610. In the parish of Heydon (Essex) in 1625, 43% of all house-owners lived in conditions of extreme poverty. One can only guess the situation of those in the parish who did not even have their own home. In one of the parishes of Salisbury in 1635, in addition to the officially recognized paupers who received parish assistance, one third of the population was assessed as poor. Pauperism in the country increased sharply either in years of poor harvest, or in periods of trade crises, when the dramatic reduction in sales – particularly of woollen goods abroad – left many in the cottage industry without work and the means of subsistence. The poor law system established by an act issued in the 39th year of the reign of Elizabeth I (1597) led either to attempts by the parish authorities to drive any potential or actual beggar out of the parish on any pretext, or to oblige him to work on conditions dictated by the employer, or else put him in the workhouse. It is not surprising that many paupers preferred vagabondage, which offered the possibility of begging or finding occasional work (and sometimes theft), to the workhouse or compulsory employment in the service of the parish elite, and this despite the draconian laws passed against ‘healthy beggars’ and ‘persistent vagabonds’, with penalties ranging from

putting the one in stocks, public flogging or imprisonment to hanging.

The scale of pauperism to be found in English society during this period is the most *visible result of a double process—the crisis and decay of the traditional medieval economic order, and the rapid process of initial accumulation*. In the pamphlet 'Provision for the Poore' by Henry Arth (end of the 16th century), the following are named as those who 'manufacture' the poor: those who wish to lead a luxurious life, for the sake of which they increase ordinary rents, and those 'unthinking oppressors'—lords who chase the landholders from the villages or oblige them to sell their property, all of this with the aim of replacing the former landholders with new ones. However, this double process was not the only cause. The existence of a huge army of paupers is also explained by the fact that the process of initial accumulation was far more rapid than the emergence of capitalist forms of labour exploitation, and this shows to what extent the socio-political order in the country was a brake on the emergence of these forms.

### PURITANISM—THE IDEOLOGY OF THE REVOLUTION

One of the most important characteristics of the mid-17th century revolution is the *originality of the ideological wrappings* around its socio-class and political goals. This was the last revolution of European significance in which the role of the militant theory of the insurgents was played by the ideology of the reformation in the form of Calvinism—in England, Puritanism. That the members of the parliamentary opposition on the eve of the revolution, and in particular shortly after it had begun, spoke in the language of secular and rational politics has deceived not only David Hume, but also many researchers thereafter. It would seem that the contradiction between the form of expression and its realized essence was so great that the evaluations of the historical role of Puritanism have proved mutually contradictory.

Some have seen in Puritanism the path to freedom and democracy, others the path to violence and tyranny, some have emphasized the conservatism of the economic



teaching of Puritanism, the significance of its medieval roots, others have seen in it one of the basic prerequisites of the development of capitalism in England and the subsequent growth of her colonial empire. Some have stressed the importance of Puritanism for the development of natural science, while others have argued that Puritanism is beside the point here, that natural science had not religious but secular sources leading to the development of capitalist relations and, finally, have pointed to the link with the Renaissance. Some have seen in Puritanism the origins of deism and love of freedom, others have emphasized its religious intolerance. All these arguments, so varied and contradictory, share one common feature—they all fail to examine the instrumental role of Puritanism in mobilizing the forces of the revolution. As a result, no answer can be found to the basic questions involved, namely: 1) to what extent and how did Puritanism reflect the essence of the revolutionary situation in England, the beginnings of which dated back to the last years of the reign of Elizabeth I, and 2) why was the function of illuminating the minds of those social strata who felt themselves oppressed by the existing order fulfilled in this case by the reformation ideology?

To answer the first question we must turn to the dogma of Calvinism in order to identify the main features of the socio-ethical style of life which followed from it for a Protestant in general, and a Puritan in particular.

We know that the reformation not only did not put an end to the Church's supervision of the believer's life in this world in the name of his destiny hereafter, but, on the contrary, replaced the previously mild supervision with rigorous regulation of every aspect of private and social life. In effect, Protestantism replaced external bonds with internal bonds, replaced external, visible devotion with internal fervour. It demanded of the believer not occasional 'good works', but the conversion of his entire life into constant and systematic service to God. Not God for people, but people for God. Human actions were meaningful only if they were a manifestation of the majesty of God. In order to understand why the Protestants not only accepted such a hitherto unprecedented religious tyranny, but even defended it with the selfless zeal of the early Christians, we must look at the central dogma of Calvinism, the theory

of predestination. We can appreciate the full force of the psychological effect of this teaching on the 'new converts' if we remember that their internal world is still dominated by the idea of salvation and bliss *in the world to come*. Only then can we understand a fact noted by many contemporaries, namely that people who had little understanding of theology displayed genuine interest in biblical texts, and discussed the meaning of 'obscure' passages with a passion that sometimes spilled over into fisticuffs.

What was the meaning of the doctrine of predestination for these people? According to this theory, God has from all eternity predestined some to eternal life (that is, to salvation), and others to eternal death. Those who have been preordained to eternal life by the inscrutable and ineluctable decision of the creator have merited this neither by their faith, nor their good works nor by any other action on their part; it is God Himself who has thus chosen of His own free will.

As a result of this theory, the individual was wholly convinced that his own 'merits', his own activity played not the slightest role in his destiny or achievements. Each who felt within himself salvation explained it as 'an unfathomable gift of divine mercy'—the sole, absolute and inscrutable source of his election.

The 'elect of God' could not fall from grace, and all his undertakings were done to the glory of God. On the other hand, no 'good work' could help the reprobate.

Finally, according to the teaching of Jean Calvin, only a very few were predestined to salvation, while the majority were rejected and condemned.

It is not difficult to see that, as regards the ultimate question of any faith—that of life hereafter, Calvinism abandoned each individual to himself, for it totally rejected belief in salvation through the Church and the sacraments. Calvin's Church did not concern itself with the fate of the individual hereafter, but served one purpose only—that of furthering the glory of God on earth.

However, if the believer was denied any magical means of salvation, if he was left no hope of propitiating the creator by his merits in this life, whence the *exceptional trust of the Puritan in God*, despite total internal alienation from the community of the Church? To put it another way, given such amazing *absolute religious individualism*, how

was the Church, powerless to alter anything in the fate of the individual hereafter, able to continue to exist at all?

The ideological manifestation of the fact that English absolutism had entered its *reactionary phase* was the politics of Puritanism among the so-called middle classes. The work 'Historians, Puritanism and the English Revolution' by Michael George Finlayson, published in Toronto in 1983, reveals above all the author's strong dislike for such general concepts as 'revolution', 'Puritanism', etc. The reason given – moreover clearly the argument of neo-positivists – is the danger of 'neo-realism', 'reification', that is, the 'materialization' of these concepts, their conversion into a historical reality. Indeed, as regards the concept of 'Puritanism' (whose use in historical science dates to the end of the 19th century), it was unknown to contemporaries of the revolution itself. They contented themselves with the term 'Puritan', applied, moreover, to very different degrees of hostility towards the existing order, and not only the Church. However, if historical science does not wish to limit itself to merely registering facts, it cannot and should not make this a pretext for rejecting the term 'Puritanism' (or other similar concepts). Scientific generalization of the concepts behind events does not lead to 'schematization', nor to the 'impoverishment' of the events being studied, provided the principle structuring and uniting them, but *concealed* by their diversity, is identified. Only then do the 'general concepts' become the 'key' which gives access to the wealth of historical reality. The beginning of Puritanism can be dated to the 1590's, and two stages should be noted in its pre-revolutionary history: 1) the *doctrinal*, when it appeared primarily as opposition to the Anglican Church and expressed itself in the spread of formal and concealed religious separatism, and 2) the *political*, when religious non-conformism fused with political opposition to the absolutism of the Stuarts. If the first stage was the result of the fact that the reformation remained incomplete in England, the inevitable development into the second was the result of the close interweaving of Church organization and the mechanism of political power, so that the collapse of the first inevitably led to the collapse of the second. James I prophetically declared: 'No bishops, no king, no nobility'.

The course of history soon confirmed the accuracy of these words: the monarchy was destroyed during the rev-

olution in the mid-17th century (1649), only three years after the official end of the episcopal organization of the national Church (1646). Since the reformation in England, the English monarch had not only held the position of head of the Church in England, appointing archbishops and bishops and deciding on points of doctrine, but the Church had been turned into an institution directly serving the interests of the court.

The royal administration determined the content of Sunday sermons read in all Churches around the country; Church courts under the bishop charged parishioners not only for failing to pay the Church tithe, but also for non-attendance at the Sunday service, for 'heresy' and for 'immorality', etc. There was no aspect of the parishioner's life which did not come under the strict surveillance of the vicar. Religious censorship of the printed word applied not only to heresy, but to political sedition. Finally, the High Commission which ran the Church was an instrument of royal prerogative, as was the notorious Star Chamber. It would not be an exaggeration therefore to conclude that the Anglican Church was one of the links—moreover the most effective—in the bureaucratic system of English absolutism. As this last became reactionary, the above-mentioned functions of the Church became increasingly odious to the growing opposition.

Let us now look more closely at those phenomena in Stuart England which are termed 'Puritanism'. Why did the very term 'Puritan' become so detestable to the powers-that-be during this period? As regards dogma, the Puritan was not far removed from the Anglican. The basic tenet of Calvinism—predestination—was equally fundamental to both Anglican and Puritan belief. However, the official royal reformation finally established under Elizabeth I had altered little in the Church services and nothing in Church organization. It was precisely in this area that the main differences between the Puritans and the Anglicans were focused, and it was here that the Anglican Church was most affected by Puritan demands to take the reformation through to its conclusion.

The relatively small format and reasonable price of the Geneva bible turned it into the bedside book of the believer (even for those of moderate income), and enabled everyone who was literate to engage in individual interpretation of its content and to compare Church or-

ganization in the primitive Church with the organization of the Anglican Church. In this sense the irrefutable authority of the bible in the eyes of the Protestants proved to be against the interests of the defenders of Anglicanism. The ideal of the primitive Church contradicted the retention of many rituals inherited from the Roman Catholic Church (stained glass windows, organ music, the holiness of the altar, the altar screen, etc., and, most importantly, the predominance of prayer over preaching, which appealed to the emotions of the believers). However, Catholicism was recalled above all by genuflection before the Eucharist (as if this involved not the symbolic but the actual presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine). Hence the demand by the Puritans that everything reminiscent of Catholic 'idolatry'—statues, stained glass, the tabernacle, candlesticks and crucifix, vestments and organ music, that is, everything which contradicted the ideal of 'a poor Church'—be banished from the Church service. Most important of all for the middle-class supporters of this ideal was the demand that the organization and management of the Church be made to correspond to the traditions of the primitive Church. The doctrine of predestination, which placed the believer face to face with the creator and freed him entirely from the power of the Church over his fate hereafter, proved in that respect to be the instrument of the external liberation of the believer. The Church could no longer claim to be the 'intermediary' between the believer and God, since none of the sacraments could alter the sentence from on high. With this on the one hand the institution of the ministry included equally both ordained and laymen, while on the other the hierarchical system among the ordained was rejected. It is not difficult to see that if the principles of Church organization inherent in Calvinism were translated into practice, this organization must inevitably cease to be an *authoritarian hierarchy*, and the *decisive voice within the Church would belong to the laity*. That, however, in the existing conditions, could only mean 'the most worthy' among them, that is, the most prosperous and, therefore, the most 'respectable'. This, in effect, summed up the organizational principles of the Puritan Church as set forth by Professor Thomas Cart-

wright of Cambridge University in his 'Book of Discipline', the handbook of Presbyterian reform.

In contrast to the hierarchical principle of organization and management which dominated in the Anglican Church, the 'Book of Discipline' proposed the election of ministers by the congregation which was governed by elders, themselves elected from among 'the worthiest'. Similarly, the power exercised by bishops was to be transferred to assemblies composed of presbyters and preachers. The same principles of election were extended to regional and national synods, which were to meet from time to time to decide upon Church (mainly doctrinal) matters.

It is not difficult to see that the Presbyterian organization of the Church embodied an attempt by the property-owning classes to bring the Church under their control, and was very far from being truly democratic. It was, in reality, intended to replace an episcopal Church subordinate to the monarchy with a Church acceptable to the oligarchy of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. In the 1580's such attempts were opposed among the Puritans themselves by Robert Browne, a preacher whose organizational principles were later known as 'the independent movement'. The independent movement within Puritanism is too broad to be reduced to the principles advanced by Browne, which soon assumed the organizational forms known as separatism. The essence of the independent movement lay in the assertion of the independence of each parish community, and the rejection of any organizational or doctrinal forms of Christian belief imposed from outside.

In 'A Booke which sheweth the Life and Manners of all True Christians', Robert Browne, chaplain to the Duke of Norfolk, argued that, given the doctrine of predestination and 'election', it was unthinkable that one man should prescribe the content of belief for another. Having rejected for the same reason the importance of the external forms of religious life, and ascribing decisive significance to internal devotion, Browne saw set prayers as 'blasphemy', a denial of 'the Holy Spirit', whose seal lay on the lips of each believer, identifying the community of believers with 'the Church of the elect'. Browne rejected any authority over the Church except that established by the free and direct election of the community itself. Contesting the unconditional authority of the presbyters within the com-

munity, he emphasized that the community should be governed by the believers, who are to have the decisive voice in parish affairs. As has been already noted, Browne's followers then developed, on the basis of his proposals, those organizational forms of the Church known as *congregationalism*. Each Church community is wholly independent of all other authority, be it secular or religious, and recognizes only the authority of Christ.

Insofar as independence, taken to its logical conclusion, turned religious individualism into an absolute, and thereby threatened the existing forms of Church organization, congregationalism embodied a 'middle path', retaining some of the liturgical forms of worship.

Congregationalism was both a protest against the threat of the tyranny of the presbyters and an attempt to convert the autonomy of the believer into the autonomy of the congregation. As the Puritans, both Presbyterian and independent, attacked the episcopal form of Church organization, they were seen as 'the most dangerous fanatics' by the royal administration. In other words, even if the Puritans contented themselves with purely religious non-conformism, their position inevitably assumed a political nuance. It must also be remembered that the episcopate sat in the House of Lords, providing 26 votes for the crown. In addition, it was through the episcopate that the crown carried through a major part of its purely administrative functions in the provinces. As early as the 1590's, Queen Elizabeth I had written to her future successor, James VI of Scotland, warning him of the dangers facing him from a sect which desired to abolish the monarchy altogether and have only presbyters. The supporters of this sect wished to assume the position of the monarchy and denied royal privilege, hiding behind the word of God. They were to be closely watched. The political edge of Puritan non-conformism was indicated with equal clarity by James himself at the conference held at Hampton Court in 1604. Addressing the Puritan ministers, he declared that their requests 'as well agreeth with a monarchy as God and the devil. Then Jack and Tom and Will and Dick shall meet, and at their pleasures censure me and my council and all our proceedings'.

As the Puritan movement in Scotland among the lower clergy suffered defeat towards the end of the 16th century, its support then came from among prosperous

lay people. For some time they did not break with Anglicanism, but by their behaviour in society underlined their aloofness from the traditional means of religious expression within Anglicanism. Very often their homes became local centres where the ideas of the dissenter movement crystallized out.

In the course of this, the theory of worldly calling came to acquire decisive importance. According to this theory, although his fate in the next world remains unknown to the believer to the end of his life, nonetheless he receives 'indirect indications' of his 'election' or 'rejection' in this world. Such indications may take the form of success in worldly undertakings. From this it followed that the more energetically the believer pursued his worldly calling, the more successfully he conducted his affairs, the more manifest were the 'indications' of his 'election'. This theory brought the sought-after reply from the heavens down to earth. The main issue — salvation — was thus converted into an ethical question, and political economy became its 'theology'. Thus, if the doctrine of predestination simply reflected the impenetrable operation of the economic mechanism at the early stage of capitalism, the theory of worldly calling turned success in this activity into evidence of 'divine mercy'. Here is the source of the business qualities of the Puritans, which gave rise on the one hand to their enterprise, industry, thrift and modest lifestyle, and on the other to their harshness towards the 'healthy' poor man, who was seen as a 'reprobate' rejected by God. The Puritan lived modestly in order to die wealthy; he denied himself the lesser good — passing luxuries, for the greater good — the possibility of accumulation. In order to retain money as capital, he prevented its expenditure on the means of consumption. His main virtues were industriousness and thriftiness. In short, the ethic of the Puritan set the productive wealth of the bourgeois against the consumer wealth of the nobility. It is possible to accept the view that, as regards economic ethic, the Puritan differed little from the Anglican. Such was the 'political economy' of Protestantism as a whole. The distinguishing mark of the Puritan was his position towards the existing secular and Church order in the country.

Of great importance in the Puritan's confidence in his own 'election' to salvation was the process termed 'conversion', an internal spiritual crisis, often a visibly painful pro-



cess in which recognition of his former 'unrighteousness' and 'sinfulness' first led the Puritan to despair, which then gradually gave way to 'hope' and then, finally, to 'enlightenment', that is, to 'sainthood'. In the course of this process of self-examination, the Puritan 'hears voices' and sees 'visions'. Only after years of 'journeying', of 'pilgrimage', of trial and doubt in a harsh spiritual 'battle between the Christian and the devil, was the 'new man' born. Many sermons describe this 'journeying', sometimes in the form of crossing a desert, sometimes as a traveller making his way through a dense forest, sometimes as a sailor battling against the storm. Let us take as an illustration one sermon by John Downame, published under the characteristic title 'Christian Warfare'. The purpose of this sermon is to console those torn with doubt by assuring them of their 'election'. 'The reader's soul is a pilgrim taking his life in his hands, a city besieged, a soldier going forth to battle'. To attain salvation, it must wage tireless battle against the temptations of the flesh and the world. It is death to grow weary 'in travelling thorow this desert and unpleasant wilderness', death 'to return back to the bondage of spiritual pharaoh'. 'Whole legions' of the lusts 'are continually readie to open the gates of our soules'. 'Thus we live in danger, our greatest danger being that we should feel no danger, and our safety lying in the very dread of feeling safe'. 'March forward', the preacher exhorts, 'and shew a courageous heart and earnest desire to overcome'.

Anyone who is in any way familiar with the situation in England in the twenties and thirties cannot but recognize the revolutionary intonation of such sermons. The preacher concludes by declaring that Christ is their leader, who recognizes them as his soldiers and will reward them for victory.

Thus, for the Puritan, holiness did not mean flight from the world, but the assertion of his holiness, that is, his 'election', within the world itself. He was to be constantly active, for everything which happened around him required his response to it. Hence his readiness for trial, his expectation of signs, his intransigence and fearlessness once he had received them. Here is how preacher Thomas Goodwin presents the moment of his own 'rebirth': 'God took him aside and said to him privately: "Do you now turn to me, and I will pardon all your Sins though never so

many, as I forgave and pardoned my servant Paul”.’ Many Puritans kept diaries in which they recorded all the ups and downs of their internal battle, all their doubts, their ‘temptations by the devil’ and ‘amazing divine liberation’.

Later Oliver Cromwell will describe the years of his ‘spiritual wanderings’ in similar terms: ‘I lived in darkness, I hated the light, I was the greatest of sinners’. However, what ‘enlightenment’, what fearlessness and self-awareness were displayed by those who, having defeated all the ‘machinations of the devil’, declared themselves ‘warriors under the banner of Christ’. What pride, what fearlessness breathes from the lines written by John Lilburne, who at the age of thirty-three was subjected to the harshest public punishment for distributing Puritan pamphlets. ‘By-standers, at Fleet Bridge, in the Strand, at Charing Cross, bade him be of good cheer. “Soe I am,” he said, “for I rest not in my owne strength, but I fight under the banner of my great and mightie Captaine the Lord Jesus Christ who hath conquered all his Enemies, and I doubt not but through his strength I shall conquer and overcome all my sufferings”.’

From such a spiritual crisis preceding his ‘conversion’, the Puritan emerges ‘reborn’, as he has received evidence of ‘divine mercy’, has been allowed to ‘see the light’. From that moment on the Puritan is a ‘soldier of God’, fulfilling ‘the will of God’. No effort, no sacrifice is too great in attaining the purpose in which, for the Puritan, divine will is embodied. In a word, the faith of the Puritan is active and militant to the highest degree. It endows the convert with courage and persistence in every worldly enterprise, as all such enterprises are merely a form of serving God. The above was, of course, a description of what might be termed the ‘ideal type’ of Puritan: in reality far from all Puritans matched this ideal in their daily behaviour. Nonetheless, it is clear that this was essentially the ethic of the knight of initial accumulation both in the town and in the countryside (although many were not, in fact, Puritans). At the same time, the ideology of Puritanism proved very attractive to the prosperous elite of the urban guilds and to prosperous freeholders in the countryside, among whom it became widespread. As literacy spread in these circles, there was a growing desire to exercise independent judgement and to seek the truth by one’s own efforts.

On the whole, Puritanism was more widespread in the economically developed counties, and in particular in the cloth manufacturing regions in the east and west of England, in counties adjoining the capital and, of course, in London itself.

As for the popular masses, they drew from the Puritan doctrines preached by a relatively small circle of learned divines deductions which went far beyond the confines of Protestant orthodoxy. The phenomenon of the conversion of orthodox Calvinism into a popular-reformation movement among the masses, whose social and political aspirations frightened the respectable Puritans with their destructiveness, cannot be explained without taking into account two factors: firstly, the socio-political conditions and the revolutionary situation which had taken shape in the country, and secondly, the spread of the practice of preaching. As the first of these will be discussed further on, we shall now look at the second.

Modern researchers into Puritanism no longer doubt the sincerity and the depth of the religious enthusiasm which seized hold of the masses. However, only a few succeed in identifying within this unusual popular religious fervour, occasionally reaching the level of ecstasy, a rationally explicable form of social indignation and not simply expectation of but demand for change. At the same time, if the Puritan opposition (that we may legitimately term the quite diverse elements of this opposition 'Puritans' is confirmed by the wide use of this term in the official terminology of government reports during this period) to the Stuart regime was not exhausted by the 'mass exodus' during the 1630's to the North American colonies, nor destroyed by the persecution launched against it, beginning with Church courts and ending with the High Commission under Archbishop Laud, but, on the contrary, put down deep roots, the secret of this 'miracle' lay in the fact that Puritanism—even modified and influenced by its respectable supporters—found itself a refuge among the common people, became their ideology, and hence developed into revolutionary sectarianism. However, in order to understand how the potentially destructive force within Calvinism was transformed in the 1640's into the energy of a mass revolutionary movement, we shall take a closer look at *preaching*, a feature typical of all popular-reformation movements in the 16th and 17th centuries. Em-

phasis on preaching is characteristic of the reformation movement as a whole. A Protestant church resembles a lecture hall rather than a church. The sermon in one way or another invariably touches upon contemporary issues which concern the congregation, using biblical texts as parables applying to events of the day. It was for this very reason that the Church hierarchy led by Archbishop Laud found undesirable the spread of preaching in preference to prayer. In the eyes of the Church authorities, preaching gave rise to discord and blasphemy, whereas prayer gave rise to accord and piety. Fears concerning the content of sermons were so great that special instructions ordered the preachers to adhere strictly to the content of specified texts, and from 1626 onwards it was forbidden to write and preach on contentious issues of faith.

However, given that in 40% of all parishes (around 4,000), the Church tithes and the right of patronage (that is, the right to appoint the incumbent vicar) were in the hands of secular persons, the so-called impropiators, many parishes were either totally without a pastor (in 1603 there were 3,804 officially appointed pastors for 9,244 parishes) or—as a result of the miserly allowance allocated for their upkeep—only able to obtain the services of people with little training for this work. Many landowners and merchant corporations maintained—alongside parishes of the official Church—preaching posts in the guise of lectureships to which were invited well-trained preachers (lecturers) known for their support for Puritanism. Of the 201 parliamentary constituencies enjoying the right to send deputies to Parliament, 74 had such lecturers, according to Archbishop Hacket. The ruling powers well appreciated the danger of the spread of such an ‘independent’ body of lecturers functioning outside the control of the Church hierarchy. Archbishop Sheldon, referring to the period which preceded the revolution, remarked: ‘Nothing had spoiled the late King’s affairs so much as the credit that the factions lecturers had in all corporations’. (Hull was the first town to offer armed resistance to the King because it had been ‘ruined’ by lecturers.) Finally, in addition to the regularly functioning lecturers, self-appointed and ‘unlawful’ preachers wandered the towns and villages. They gathered their audience, composed of people of similar status to themselves, in the taverns, public squares and crossroads.

At the beginning of the 1630's, England was covered with a dense network of semi-legal and illegal Church congregations which functioned as 'enlightenment' centres. We can form some idea of the kind of people who attended them by reading the accounts of a preacher of those days, one Henry Smith. Among those who came regularly to listen to him, he names a grocer, a locksmith, a blacksmith, tailors, saddlers, glass-cutters, etc. Poor, simple people who had never before distinguished themselves by any religious devotion displayed an eager interest in such apparently abstract topics as 'predestination', 'justification', 'conversion'. Having listened to such a sermon, they were in no hurry to make their way home, but stayed to debate, sometimes arguing heatedly over what they had heard. About another preacher called Julines Herring we learn that people came from twenty towns and villages. They arrived early in the morning and stayed until night-fall. The sermons of Samuel Clarke attracted people, young and old, men and women, within a radius of seven miles, summer and winter.

It is clear that this sudden wave of fervour which swept through the popular masses contained something which affected them very nearly if this fervour was so profound and so full of inner tension. This was the enthusiasm of people informed by these new prophets, in the name of God, that the time of change was at hand. However, in order to infuse such hope in imminent freedom, the preachers had to depart considerably from Calvinist orthodoxy. In fact, in its strictly Calvinist interpretation, the doctrine of 'predestination', as also the doctrine of 'worldly calling', declared that the 'elect' were very few, and certainly not the poor. Naturally, on addressing an audience composed mainly of the poor, the preachers, rather than cast doubts on the 'election' of their listeners, assumed the more rewarding task of confirming their confidence in 'salvation'. In the final analysis, they taught, the path to salvation is open to all who wish to follow it. In other words, the fate of the believer is in his own hands. The famous preacher John Preston, in his sermon 'The New Covenant', first published in 1629, and reissued many times in the years that followed, taught that in order to be saved it was sufficient to believe in one's own salvation. Thus 'salvation' ceased to be inscrutable for those who wished to be saved, and in this lies the departure from or-

thodox Calvinism. Similarly, assuring his listeners, who had difficulty reading the bible, that 'the true word of God' was accessible precisely to them and not to the learned, the popular preachers wittingly or unwittingly assisted the spread of revolutionary sectarianism. In 1639, for example, the preacher Samuel How published a pamphlet entitled 'The Sufficiencie of the Spirits Teaching Without Human Learning; or a Treatise Tending to Prove Humane Learning to Be no Help to the Spiritual Understanding of the Word of God'. More, he asserted, 'learning is a handicap to the soul'. In his heart the believer knows more about Jesus Christ than all the doctors at the universities. 'They do pervert all Scriptures to their own destruction', seeking to prove only that which suits them, and not at all concerned to reveal the truth. It is quite clear that the spread of such views threatened the foundations of every Church as a national, and all the more as a necessary institution. If each craftsman and tiller not only acquires equal rights, but becomes the only interpreter of the bible acceptable to God, then in matters of faith there is no more room for unconditional authority and courts without appeal. In the final account, everything which concerns the conscience becomes a matter of opinion, and a universal and mandatory Church loses any divine sanction.

It is no surprise to discover that the search for 'their own' or 'real truth' sent many of those who listened to such sermons from congregation to congregation and from sect to sect. Hence the rise of that religious independence movement which so frightened the presbyters, and which, with the beginning of the revolution in the 1640's, came out into the open.

The sectarianism of the 1630's and 1640's is a striking example of the gradual *elaboration of a popular ideology of revolution* reflecting the real desire for social change in the popular masses, albeit expressed in biblical images and parables. The rise of these 'popular clubs' on the eve and at the beginning of the revolution is revealed by the number of sects which 'suddenly' surfaced: Baptists, Socinians, Familists, Seekers, Millenarians, Ranters and others. Although these sects arose in the wake of the Protestant reformation, they were hostile to rational theology and based themselves mainly on mysticism. The Calvinist theory of absolute and eternal predestination was replaced in their preaching with the concept of universal 'redemption'

and 'justification'. The mystical concept of the presence of Christ in the soul of each believer, of the universal 'divine element' in human nature, was not compatible with the 'condemnation' of the majority of mankind. Therefore in the teachings of popular sects, the concept of the 'wrath of God' gave way to the idea of the unbounded love of God for his children; the 'children of sin' became the 'children of the light'. The 'elect' and the 'reprobate' were replaced by 'those who love God' and 'those who hate God'. Moreover, as regards salvation, clear preference was given to the poor man, as only his soul is turned to God and open to his blessing. The rich love not God, but their own wealth, glory and honour; they are deaf to his voice.

We shall not give here a detailed description of the teaching of each religious sect. They shared in common a rejection of the official Church and the 'servants of the devil' supported by the tithe, and the replacement of the official service with a free and 'divinely inspired' sermon which could be given by any of the 'brothers' (or even 'sisters'). Here it was the 'living bible' and 'prophecy' which dominated, seemingly highly individual for each believer, yet amazingly consonant with what his sectarian brethren were also seeking. Millenarian hopes of the imminent coming of Christ the Saviour and the beginning of his thousand-year kingdom on earth were widespread among the sects, and a great many 'prophets' appeared among the people preaching on this basis. The more radical among them, for example the Familists and Anabaptists, preached communal ownership, while others 'prepared' their audience for the second coming of Christ and the beginning of the thousand-year reign of the 'saints' (the 'Millenarians' or 'people of the fifth monarchy'). (The thousand-year kingdom, which the Millenarians linked to their hopes of rescue from the evils of the reign of anti-Christ, was counted as the fifth because four world empires had gone before it—the Median, the Assyro-Babylonian, the Greek and the Roman.) Tales of 'miraculous visions', a 'voice' and 'signs' circulated by word of mouth. On a 'summons from above', many left their homes, abandoned their usual occupations and set off to wander the country. Among the mass of the population, the sense of impending 'great changes' sometimes took the form not only of verbal fantasies, but also extravagant behaviour. The nature of this behaviour was, of course, determined by the level of

consciousness of those involved, but in every case it was a protest against centuries of social and spiritual oppression, a reaction against the hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the hereditary lords.

Knollys, a well-known preacher of the day, wrote: 'As for the saints who were to rule in triumph beside him, who were they but the poor? ...The voice of Jesus Christ reigning in his Church comes first from the Multitude, the Common People... God used the Common People and the Multitude to proclaime that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. As when Christ came at first, the poore receive the Gospell, not many Wise, not many Noble, not many Rich, but the Poore. You that are of meaner rank, common People, be not discouraged; for God intends to make use of the common People in the great Worke of preaching the Kingdome of his Soune. Let them pray, let them make their voices heard...' Was it not these very ideas which were preached by the passionate supporter of the Puritans, the young John Lilburne, as he stood at the pillory: '...he doth not chuse many rich, nor many wise ... but the fools, ideots, base and contemptible poore men and women in the esteeme of the world'. They are the ones who 'received the Gospel and entertain the glad tidings of life and salvation'. 'Who am I?' he asked. 'I am a yong man and noe Scoller. A stripling, that never studied Philosophy, Logick, Rhetorick, nor ever was at any University, to learne any Lattin, Greeke, or Hebrew'. Nevertheless, he continues, he has the advantage over the great learned doctors of the world... 'Lilburne has in six months in prison ... got more knowledge of the mysteries of Godliness than is to be found among all the bishops in England'.

In a pamphlet entitled 'The Schismatick Stigmatized', Richard Carter wrote: 'And in stead of Orthodoxe Divines, they set up all Kinde of Mechanicks, as Shooe-makers, Coblers, Taylers, and Botchers, Glovers who preach of nothing but Mag-pies and Crows, Boxe-makers, and Button-makers, Coach-men and Pelt-makers, and Bottle-Ale-sellers, these predicant Mechanicks and lawlesse lads ... astonish and amaze the poor ignorant multitude, perswading them that he is a fellow that looketh into deeper matters, than the common sort ... beating the Pulpit with both his fists in a passion of blinde zeale, able to drive his unlucky Auditors out of their littel wits, or seven senses'.



The scale of this spiritual awakening of the masses can be judged by the prominent role played by these popular preachers in the ranks of the parliamentary army both during and after the civil war.

At a prayer meeting during the civil war, one ordinary woman stood up and said that anyone who had the word of conviction was to speak. Then, as all those present remained silent, she continued, declaring that the time had come for what had been promised by God to be fulfilled—'I shall pour my spirit on to my servants, and they shall prophesy'. Reports of women preachers came from Middlesex, Kent, Cambridge and other counties. Such was the beginning of the spiritual awakening of the masses, who were shortly to carry through a great social revolution.

Puritanism as a whole, particularly in its more diffuse versions, provided the socially heterogeneous opposition to absolutism with not only a conceptual weapon, but also leadership and forms of organization both for the broad strata of large and middle-scale proprietors and for the popular masses, whose minds absorbed the traditions of Lollardism (Lollards was the name given in the 14th century to popular preachers who took part in the peasant uprising led by Wat Tyler in 1381) and of the sectarianism which had arisen on the basis of Protestantism. The preaching of Calvinism, modified to correspond to the interests of the broad masses, awoke in them a sense of the dignity and social importance of each individual, regardless of his social status, and also awareness of the fact that the existing social structure was without divine sanction. Moreover, such preaching deprived even the king of the halo of sanctity, since his elevated rank before the authority of God had no more significance than the position of the least of the king's subjects. Seen from this point of view, the teaching of anti-monarchists such as John Knox and John Ponet appeared as a ready-made expression of that awareness which penetrated the crowd only on the eve of the revolution.

Thus, although Puritanism as a religious movement of the reformation arose some time before a revolutionary situation took shape in the country, in the 1620's and 1630's it became a broad current of social thought, and also a social movement. It was only in connection with this situation that its most important result was the propaga-

tion among broad sections of the population of a sense of the urgent need for changes both within the Church and the state.

## **THE CRISIS OF STUART ABSOLUTISM. PROLOGUE TO THE REVOLUTION**

Over recent years the question of the absolutism of the early Stuarts has attracted particular attention among historiographers. However, the 'revisionist' historians seek to disprove the view that the political history of the first four decades of the 17th century is to be seen as a prologue to the revolution of the 1640's, which was its natural consequence. Hence the task of historiography, whose conclusions should conform to the objective course of the process, does not consist in reading the history of the revolution backwards (as proposed by Geoffrey R. Elton), but in reading the history of the early Stuarts forwards. This last is possible on two conditions: 1) the ability to perceive, behind the zig-zags of court and parliamentary policy, the conflicting interests of large social groups, and 2) the ability, when analyzing particular events, not to forget both what has gone before and what will follow.

In seeking to indicate those factors which determined the development of the political drama in the period which Marx termed 'the prologue to revolution' reference must be made first of all to the subjective factor, to which traditional English-language historiography attaches almost prime importance when analyzing the direction in which the political situation was moving in the country during the first forty years of the 17th century. In particular this involves the personality of James I, who succeeded to the throne of England in 1603, and that of his son and successor, Charles I. We are unable, within the confines of this work, to examine the biographies of these two monarchs. Instead we shall simply note that, although the failings of both exceeded their virtues, they were not responsible for the deep crisis of English absolutism which marked the period of their rule; they had inherited it along with the English crown. It would be fairer to note, therefore, that the personal failings of these rulers merely served to highlight the flaws in an outworn political sys-

tem, and thereby, very probably, served to accelerate awareness of this fact among even politically inexperienced sections of the population. Generally speaking, there are always those in history who, in one way or another, facilitate the resolution of problems facing a given nation.

His 'most learned' Majesty, James I, arrived in London having already assimilated the doctrine of absolute monarchy, and revealed from the very first a total inability to understand the specifics of the conditions in England, where he tried to put this doctrine into practice. The 'narrowness' and 'inflexibility' of this doctrine, commented on by every historian, and of the policies based upon it and pursued by the first two Stuarts, was nothing other than the reflection of the 'narrowness' and 'inflexibility' which now marked the system of government. Absolutism, on entering the phase of crisis and decline, inevitably 'binds' itself more rigidly along with its domestic and foreign policy to the interests of an ever more narrow social group—the court and some of the provincial nobility, which now become its *main social support*. This change in the policy of absolutism is the inevitable and direct result of the worsening social contradictions of the period. The new 'middle classes', the wealthy, the enterprising merchants in the towns and the 'bourgeoisified' gentry in the countryside, had by that time become objectively so powerful and, subjectively, had developed such an awareness of their own interests that the continuation of the previous (Tudor) policy of patronage in their regard would for them have been restrictive and expensive, and for the Stuarts simply impossible, since for absolutism this would have meant, in effect, 'renunciation of its own nature'. That is the first factor. The second factor, operating along the same lines, was the dramatic shrinking of the social base of absolutism, the division of the English aristocracy into what constituted in effect two separate clans—the 'old' and the 'new' aristocracy, whose positions with respect to the capitalist order which had emerged in the country, and hence the policy of the Stuarts, were in some respects diametrically opposed. Under the early Stuarts, this sharply reduced the *range of possibilities* for manoeuvring between the opposing interests of the various social classes by exploiting their clashes and alternating a policy of compromise and display of strength, making free

use of the royal prerogatives, etc. In short, the particularly striking features of the 'political blindness', 'inflexibility' and other subjective failings in the first Stuarts coincided amazingly with the loss of the previously progressive features of absolutism or, more precisely, with the loss of the objective possibility of preserving in the country the political climate of the Tudor period and continuing their policies in the first half of the 17th century.

Finally, the English Parliament, in its relations with the early Stuarts and in its own political behaviour, reflected a new balance, proportionally and structurally, in the property status of certain classes represented there—in the House of Lords on the one hand, and the House of Commons on the other. The shift in property status in favour of the new middle classes could not but lead to increasing parliamentary claims to have a voice in court policy. It is clear that the 'rebelliousness' of Parliament was directly related to the marked narrowing of the social interests represented by the policies of the early Stuarts.

Although, as has already been noted, the first indications of growing opposition in Parliament to the policy of the Crown appeared in the last years of the reign of Elizabeth I, this opposition only became vocal in the first Parliament under her successor, which chose as the subject of its discussions the cardinal issue of the constitution: the boundaries of royal prerogative and the privileges of Parliament. This was in reply to the absolutist claims of James I, set out in his treatise 'The Trew Law of Free Monarchies'. Whereas James I was inclined to view Parliament as an auxiliary institution which had emerged thanks to the indulgence of the monarch, who possessed absolute power of divine origin, 'The Apology of the Commons', a document compiled by the House of Commons for the 'instruction' of a foreign king, decisively declared that in England the monarch is neither absolute nor independent of Parliament as head of the state, whose constitutional structure is based on recognition of Parliament as the supreme organ of state headed by the king, and not recognition of the king independently of Parliament. Rejecting entirely the principle of the divine origin of royal power, the House of Commons declared in its 'Apology' that the power of a mortal king is neither divine nor the possession of one person. Finally, contrary to the tendency on the part of James I to see

the rights and freedoms of subjects, embodied in the privileges of Parliament, as 'temporary concessions' whose duration is limited to the period of a given session of Parliament, the 'Apology' presented them as lawful and inherent rights confirmed by Magna Carta and other statutes of the realm. As the subsequent history of parliaments during the pre-revolutionary period was to show, the argument which began in 1604, during the first Parliament under James I, on the question of royal prerogative (that is, over the royal power that was his by virtue of succeeding to the English throne) was, in effect, an argument over the limits on the rights of the monarch with respect to the *property* of his subjects. This argument reflected the desire of those subjects to protect a property now bourgeois in nature from feudal exploitation via royal prerogative.

The economic programme of the propertied classes, set out by the compilers of 'The Apology of the Commons', can be resumed as follows: the free and unrestricted circulation of the property of subjects, protected by Parliament from claims by the Crown.

As regards major landowners, this entailed the abolition of the so-called knightly holding from the king, which gave the latter, as the feudal lord, not only the right to demand from the landholder certain feudal dues, but also to exercise patronage over heirs during their minority, which often proved disastrous for their estates. Supervision of the daily civil regulation of these estates was exercised by the Court of Wards and Liveries. As regards 'burgher' property, this referred to the freedom of trade and protection of income from taxes not permitted by Parliament. Finally, as the king was suspected, not without reason, of secret sympathy for Catholicism, the 'Apology' denied the king the right to introduce any changes in the existing Anglican Church, its organization and its doctrine. For its part, the House of Commons 'assured' the king that it did not aspire to any novelties of a Puritan nature, that it had no sympathy for Puritan or Brownian ideas or any manifestations of religious dissent, free-thinking and individualism in religious matters. Nonetheless, James I accused the House of Commons of sympathy for Puritanism, and dissolved Parliament. Thus began the 'constitutional conflict' which was to be the prologue to revolution. By set-

ting a Parliament which was convened only for short periods against the power of a monarch who sat continually on the throne and who administered justice independently of Parliament, James I began to implement in practice his doctrine of the unrestricted power of the monarch vis-a-vis Parliament. The conference at Hampton Court (1604) was summoned in order to arrive at 'uniformity' in religious matters. Having given a decisive 'no' to even the moderate proposals of the Puritans by issuing the so-called canons and royal proclamations, by which he sought to clamp down on any form of dissent, James I began the systematic persecution of dissenters, threatening the Puritans with exile or 'something worse'. Expulsion from the Anglican Church threatened anyone who questioned the truth of its doctrines and liturgy. All religious communities except the Anglican Church were declared 'unlawful'. In short, resolute battle was declared against religious 'unrest'.

The reign of the first Stuart, who based himself on the doctrine of unrestricted royal prerogative, was marked by a similar approach in every other sphere of domestic and foreign policy.

Before examining the reign of James I, however, it would be useful to draw attention to one not unimportant factor which explains both the inefficiency of the superficially very energetic administrative activity of the government during this period, and the general weakness of Stuart absolutism in general. This factor is the absence of a bureaucratic administration in the provinces strictly subordinate to the centre. The most important link in local government—the justices of the peace (officially unpaid servants of the Crown)—were too closely linked to the interests of the local gentry (from whose ranks they were recruited) to follow the letter of the instructions arriving from London, all the more so as in many instances they themselves were among those guilty of infringing them, and against whom London demanded that repressive measures be taken. To this was added the desire of the central administration to increase by every means possible the money coming into the state coffers. This distorted even the most noble intents of the court, since infringement of the instructions was more profitable than their effective implementation: infringement brought fines into the state purse, whereas the second would have left it

empty. This is beautifully illustrated by the renewal under Charles I of Tudor legislation against enclosures. The royal commissions which were sent into the counties uncovered dozens of instances of violation by the landowners. The offenders were fined, but following the payment of the fine, their enclosure of land was legalized. The essential purpose of all the other legislative acts of the Stuarts, whose avowed aim was to 'protect' the weak against oppression by the strong and powerful, was similarly distorted. One could take as another example the 'protectionist' policy of the first Stuarts in industry, their attempts to 'supervise' adherence to Elizabethan legislation on seven years' apprenticeship as a prerequisite condition of engaging in the practice of crafts and trade, to 'supervise' the technology of production (in cloth manufacture), the wages of hired workers and the price of grain (in years of poor harvest). Such a policy apparently 'defended' the interests of the consumer, the craftsmen and the trade corporations. In practice, everything was reduced to additional sources of state revenue, or to ensuring an income for those close to the king — owners of royal monopoly licences granted by the favour of the court, or sold off at high prices. The verification in London of the quality of woollen cloth for export, for example, became under James I an open trade in the 'stamp' guaranteeing the quality. At the same time, the introduction of a system of inspectors (*aulnoyer*) could not but impede the spread of new technology in cloth manufacture, and particularly in the manufacture of lighter woollen fabrics (new *draperies*). The fiscal nature of royal supervision in this area was equally manifest in the creation in 1619 of a special commission, which quite literally traded in 'pardons' for infringing the statute on apprenticeship. However, there can be no doubt that the most intolerable practice from the point of view of the interests of the consumer and of entrepreneurial trading circles was the policy of granting and selling monopolies. Leaving aside royal monopolies in mining, metallurgy and a number of other industries connected with the manufacture of weapons, powder, etc., we find dozens of monopolies having no relationship to national interests but wholly explained by the fiscal interests of the court and the court nobility. What guile was not used to introduce monopolies which brought 'free' revenue to their possessors and, like sponges, soaked up

profit from the most diverse forms of trade and industry (not to mention the extent to which this practice led to increased market prices on these goods). The life of an Englishman of the day, literally besieged by monopolies, is eloquently described by the English historian Christopher Hill: 'It is difficult for us to picture to ourselves the life of a man living in a house built with monopoly bricks, with windows (if any) of monopoly glass; heated by monopoly coal (in Ireland monopoly timber), burning in a grate made of monopoly iron... He slept on monopoly feathers, did his hair with monopoly brushes and monopoly combs. He washes himself with monopoly soap... He dressed in monopoly lace, monopoly linen, monopoly leather... His clothes were held up by monopoly belts, monopoly buttons, monopoly pins.

'...He ate monopoly butter, monopoly red herrings, monopoly salmons... His food was seasoned with monopoly salt, monopoly pepper, monopoly vinegar. Out of monopoly glasses he drank monopoly wines and monopoly spirits; out of pewter mugs made from monopoly tin he drank monopoly beer made from monopoly hops, kept in monopoly barrels or monopoly bottles, sold in monopoly-licensed ale-houses. He smoked monopoly tobacco in monopoly pipes... He wrote with monopoly pens, on monopoly writing-paper; read (through monopoly spectacles, by the light of monopoly candles) monopoly printed books, including monopoly Bibles and monopoly Latin grammars... He tipped with monopoly farthings... When he made his will, he went to a monopolist... Pedlars were licensed by a monopolist. Mice were caught in monopoly mousetraps.'

In 1621, the opposition estimated that there were around 700 types of monopoly in the country. As one member of Parliament noted at the beginning of the 17th century, only bread was apparently missing from the list. It is not difficult to appreciate that monopolies daily affected hundreds of thousands of Englishmen. To what extent the monopoly system lay like a dead weight on the English economy can be judged merely by noting the difficulties it erected at every step in entrepreneurial and trading activity, which faced endless control, the threat of fines for various 'infringements', not to mention the rising price of commodities manufactured in the country or imported from abroad. However, the most curious feature of this



parasitic system was that, while intended as an additional and major source of extra-parliamentary revenue, it proved far more effective in filling the pockets of court monopoly holders and their clients and agents. By the end of the 1630's, monopolies were bringing into the Exchequer £100,000 per annum. How much private monopoly owners were taking can only be conjectured, but it must have been many times more. The following data illustrates the situation: from each shilling which the monopolies added to the market price of a given commodity, the Crown received only 1 1/2 pence, that is, one eighth. It is not difficult to imagine the discontent provoked in the country by the monopoly system, a discontent which could not but be known to the court (it made itself felt in the first Parliament under James I), but which the king completely ignored.

Although the Parliament of 1624 declared that monopolies were opposed to the 'fundamental laws of this ... realm', their sale continued under Charles I. One vivid illustration of the economic consequences of such a policy is the Cokayne Project. The export of undyed cloth to the Netherlands was extremely unprofitable for the English, as it was dyed and dressed there by Dutch merchants for re-export to Germany and the Baltic, where it was sold at triple the price. Cokayne proposed to James I that he forbid the further export of undyed woollen cloth, and export dressed cloth directly to the Baltic without Dutch intermediaries. Having persuaded the court by the promise of £300,000 per annum, Cokayne succeeded in depriving the Merchant Adventurers, the chief exporters of undressed cloth, of their licence. This company was replaced in 1614 by the King's Merchant Adventurers, with a licence to export dyed and dressed cloth. However, the whole enterprise soon provoked a serious crisis in the main cloth manufacturing regions of England, since the Dutch refused to import any cloth from England, while the new company lacked the shipping to export directly to the Baltic. Finally, as the undyed cloth was manufactured mainly in agricultural regions, where there was a lack of the technical facilities and skills necessary for dying and dressing cloth, the Cokayne Project affected them most, since the loss of a market left many weavers, craftsmen and apprentices who worked for cloth merchants without employment. A year later the king was obliged to restore their

former privileges to the old Merchant Adventurers who exported undyed cloth. However, up to the revolution it proved impossible to recover the former European markets for this basic national export commodity. In the trade crisis at the beginning of the 1620's, Parliament declared the export of dyed and dressed cloth open to all, but the Merchant Adventurers succeeded in recovering their monopoly thanks, of course, to a considerable payment to the Exchequer. Although the revenue to the Exchequer from taxes on the import and export of commodities increased considerably during the reign of James I, nonetheless, as a result of the massive sale of royal lands, the rent revenue of the Crown as a landowner was substantially reduced. Elizabeth I sold royal lands to the value of £800,000, and James I to the value of £775,000, which reduced the revenue from royal lands by a further 25%. The House of Commons decided to exploit the king's financial difficulties, suggesting that he abolish knightly holdings and the Court of Wards and Liveries, as well as the right to purchase on the market items necessary for the court at reduced prices. Although the Commons assessed these Crown rights at only about £100,000 per annum, it was proposed to the king that he exchange them for an annual revenue of £200,000. This 'great accord', however, remained unrealized: the king did not wish to surrender his rights as a feudal lord, and the House of Commons replied to his conditions with new demands. The worsening financial crisis at court, which obliged the king to look for sources of revenue independent of Parliament, became the pivot of the constitutional conflict. Attempts by Parliament to restrict the possibility of the Crown supplementing its revenue from sources not under parliamentary control inevitably led to an insoluble conflict over the boundaries of royal prerogatives. In addition to the extravagance of James I and his liberality towards favourites, the financial difficulties of the Crown were largely explained by the inefficiency of the financial system, which was revealed not only in the farming out of tax collection, but also in the fact that even the taxes permitted by Parliament brought into the Exchequer only a fraction of the promised amount. The main reason was that the wealthy minimized their income and 'taxed themselves' at a ridiculously low level. In 1560, for example, 78 families in Sussex paid £48 in tax. In 1621 they paid £14. Behind this

conflict, as we have seen, lay the contradictions between the domestic and foreign policy of the first Stuarts and the requirements of the so-called middle classes, who embodied the capitalist order in the economy of the country.

We have already described the main features of the economic and religious policy of James I. Let us now take a brief look at certain features of his foreign policy. At the beginning of the 17th century, Spain was the largest and most powerful Catholic power, and the bulwark of the counter-reformation in Europe. Since the days of Mary Tudor (1553-1558), Spain had become the most dangerous 'national' enemy of England, since from here came the threat of the restoration of Catholicism in the country, and the inevitable return to the Church of secularized land.

Although the defeat of the 'Invincible Armada' (1588) had caused that danger to abate, it had not completely eliminated it. From the beginning of the Thirty Years' War (1618), this threat loomed again. If Spain had been victorious, who can say how matters would have stood for England. However, James I and his successor, Charles I, closed their eyes to this menace. They were both supporters of Catholic monarchies—the French and the Spanish—in which they saw models to be imitated. In 1604 James I concluded a peace treaty with Spain, and conducted his policy almost entirely according to the dictates of the Spanish ambassador in London, the Count of Gondomar. Moreover, in the interests of a rapprochement with Spain, James did nothing to defend the territory of the Elector Palatine, husband of his daughter Elizabeth, when it was invaded by Spanish troops. Finally, he was also nurturing plans to marry his son and heir, Charles, Prince of Wales, to the Spanish Infanta. His mind was captured by the idea of the rich dowry with which he could ease his financial position.

In the Parliament of 1621 there were loud protests against these plans, and demands for a war with Spain. In reply, James I dissolved Parliament, seeing in such demands an 'impermissible' encroachment into a sphere of policy which was the exclusive prerogative of the king. The Count of Gondomar described this action as 'the best thing that has happened in the interests of Spain and the Catholic religion since Luther began to preach heresy a hundred years ago'. When the plans for a Spanish mar-

riage collapsed, and Charles returned in October, 1625, from Spain, humiliated by a rejection, the country was jubilant. The citizens of London set off fireworks in the streets. Now both Charles and the powerful favourite of James I, the Duke of Buckingham (who had accompanied Charles to Spain), supported an immediate war with Spain. The Parliament of 1624 proved surprisingly generous, voting James three subsidies immediately on condition that he declared war on Spain and rendered assistance to his son-in-law, Frederick, Elector Palatine. However, the hastily mounted military expedition to the Palatine ended in a complete fiasco; the troops sent there were far too few in number.

In the mean time, Charles had married a zealous Catholic, Henrietta Maria, sister of the French King Louis XIII. In so doing he had made the personal pledge, confirmed by his father, James I, to grant English Catholics the same 'rights and privileges' which had been provided for in the unrealized agreement on a marriage to the Spanish princess. In 1625, Charles I committed himself to send ships against the French Protestants (Huguenots), who were blockaded by royal troops on land in the port town of La Rochelle. However, the troops raised for this royal expedition mutinied in opposition to an action so blasphemous in their eyes. The Duke of Buckingham, commander of the expedition, then changed its plans: having declared war on France, he set out to relieve the besieged town (1627). This expedition, however, also ended in total failure, Buckingham being unable to break through to the port. In the opinion of opposition circles, 'Since England was England, it received not so dishonourable a blow'. Despite the insistent demands of the merchants for war against Spain, not only an accursed religious enemy, but also a manifest obstacle to trade with the New World, Charles I continued the policy of secret agreement with this country. Taken together, the Catholic sympathies of both James I and Charles I (their wives were both Catholics, and Catholic priests openly celebrated mass at the court), combined with the religious policy of Archbishop Laud, designed to retain in the Anglican liturgy as much as possible of the Catholic ceremony, could not but arouse in the opposition suspicion of a 'compact' to return England to Rome.

## THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF THE 1620's AND 1630's

We have looked at the main contradictions between the policies of the early Stuarts and the interests of the entrepreneurial sections of the propertied classes represented in Parliament and constituting in the House of Commons the bulwark of the opposition to these policies. We have been able to see that the main constitutional question of the boundaries on royal prerogatives, an issue on which battle was waged in virtually every Parliament under James I, could be summed up, in the sphere of domestic policy, as the question of whether or not the king had the right, without the agreement of Parliament, to raise new taxes or to resort to other, extra-parliamentary forms of taxation; in the sphere of foreign policy, the question was whether the king was obliged to take account of the opinion of Parliament before undertaking any step in international affairs. The reply of the opposition was clear in both cases: supreme power in the country lay not with the king outside Parliament, but with the king and Parliament, that is, with the king acting with the agreement of both houses. James I, on the contrary, according to his doctrine of 'free' (that is, absolute) monarchy, considered it his inalienable right not to consult Parliament except in the case of particular financial need, and to govern the country in a manner akin to that of the king of France, that is, on the principle that the king's will is law. It was no accident that, over a period of ten years (excluding the short Parliament of 1614), he governed without Parliament (1611-1621). For England, this was, in effect, a wholly new form of absolute monarchy.

In 1621, however, James was obliged, against his own wishes, to convene Parliament, as the financial position of the Crown had become critical. The extravagance of the court on the one hand, and the inefficiency of the tax system on the other (the reduction of tax for some and the concealed taxation of others had become a mass phenomenon, and there was no tax-collecting apparatus independent of the local authorities) prevented the Crown achieving stable financial independence of parliamentary subsidies. In reply to the king's appeal for support, the opposition in the House of Commons subjected every aspect of government activity to harsh criticism, especially the

monopoly system. However, the conflict with the Crown became particularly acute over the proposed marriage of Charles, Prince of Wales, to the Spanish Infanta. As we have noted, this question touched upon the very sensitive economic, political and religious interests of wide sections of English society. In reply to the petition of Parliament, which contained sharp attacks on Spain and demands that measures be taken to defend 'the true religion', James I again stated his familiar 'theory' that the rights and freedoms of Parliament were not 'a hereditary possession', but an act of royal indulgence of which Parliament could be deprived at any moment. When the House of Commons, in a memorandum protesting at such an interpretation of its rights and privileges, declared that the discussion of all matters pertaining to the Crown, the state, and the defence of religion were its ancient and inalienable right, the king destroyed the memorandum: at a meeting of the Privy Council, in the presence of the heir, the king himself tore the text of the memorandum out of the journal of the House of Commons so as to prevent its 'ambivalent statements' establishing a precedent for the future. The Parliament, of course, was immediately dissolved. However, in 1624, James I was again obliged to convene Parliament. Now, following the collapse of the proposed Spanish marriage, the king, who was indeed in a hopeless financial position (London refused to grant him further loans, while the trade crisis had reduced revenue from taxation), requested 'free and sincere advice' from both houses. This time James I had no choice but to listen to bitter reproaches from the opposition in which they listed all the mistakes of his domestic and foreign policy. However, no sooner had he received from Parliament the long-awaited subsidies (the name given to the voted taxation) than he immediately revealed that double game typical of Stuart policy. Only a few months had passed, for example, after James I had promised not to conclude any agreements with foreign states without the knowledge and consent of Parliament, when, without hesitation, he concluded a secret agreement with France on the marriage between Charles, Prince of Wales, and Henrietta Maria. As a result, despite the demands of Parliament, England was to receive a Catholic queen, whose court could become a centre of Catholic intrigue in this Protestant country.

The conflict between the king and Parliament flared up with renewed force during the first years of the reign of Charles I. It reached its height when the House of Commons presented to the king its famous Petition of Right (1628). Having accepted the Petition and given a 'favourable' reply, the king nonetheless dissolved Parliament shortly thereafter on the grounds that the content of the Petition was 'incompatible with royal prerogative'. In this Petition we come across one very important feature of the revolutionary ideology of the 17th and 18th centuries—the use of the historical myth of 'the freedoms of the English nation' dating back to pre-Norman times—a cause which the opposition defended, and the interests of which it expressed. The compilers of the Petition of Right (referring to the rights contained in Magna Carta, and interpreting very freely, in the spirit of their own age, this quintessentially feudal document), presented the claims of Parliament as 'ancient' and 'hereditary', based on traditions going back to ancient times. Thus the claims of the Crown appeared to be an unprecedented 'innovation', a 'usurpation', a 'violation of the traditional constitution'. Article 39 of Magna Carta, to which the compilers of the Petition referred, contained the wholly feudal formula, which by then had totally lost its meaning and was omitted. However, the words 'no freeman may be taken or imprisoned or be disseised of his freeholds or liberties, or his free customs, or be outlawed or exiled; or in any manner destroyed, but by the lawful judgement of his peers, or by the law of the land' were reproduced in full.

When, on 2 March, 1629, the king ordered that the parliamentary session be suspended until 10 March, there were good grounds for fearing that this suspension would become the dissolution of Parliament. Therefore, as the speaker of the House of Commons rose from his seat and moved to the door, two members of the House ran after him and forced him to return to his seat—without the speaker the House could not sit. The House was then hastily requested to adopt the following resolutions: 1) anyone introducing papist novelties into the Anglican Church is to be viewed as the main enemy of this realm; 2) anyone who advises the king to raise taxes without the agreement of Parliament is to be viewed as an enemy of his country; 3) anyone who voluntarily pays taxes not passed by Parliament is to be declared a traitor to the

freedoms of England. The House unanimously adopted these resolutions without any debate, and then the members began to leave. At the doors they were met by an armed detachment sent by the king to disperse Parliament. Parliament was immediately dissolved. This was the first time the House of Commons had openly refused to heed the will of the king, and it proved to be a herald of the approaching storm.

Taken overall, the 'political crisis' of the 1620's is rightly described in historiography as the period when initiative shifted to the House of Commons. During these years, the opposition in the House of Commons had gained sufficient strength not only to influence the opinion of the majority of members, but also to oppose the procedural machinations of the Crown with its own counter-measures ensuring it the initiative in raising questions and directing parliamentary debate. The practice of turning a session of the House into a session of a committee of the House, for example, meant that the speaker (appointed by the Crown) did not have to be present for the session to have proper competence. The speaker's place was taken by a chairman elected from their own members. Extreme leaders of the House, who were usually members of the Privy Council and who supervised and directed the course of debates in favour of the Crown, were gradually replaced by the House's own leaders, who enjoyed sufficient authority to take with them the majority of the members. The House of Commons secured the right to verify the competence of newly-elected members of Parliament, itself settling disputed issues. Finally, the procedure for impeachment—i.e. motion to charge court officials in the House of Commons and instigate a judicial investigation—was creating the prerequisites for the principle of government responsibility to Parliament. To what extent the House of Commons felt strong enough to claim active control over the activity of government is revealed by the 'Protestation' of the House of Commons in 1621, which declared: 'The liberties, franchises, privileges and jurisdictions of Parliament are the ancient and undoubted birth-right and inheritance of the subjects of England; ...the arduous and urgent affairs concerning the king, state and defence of the realm and of the Church of England, and the maintenance and making of laws, of mischiefs and grievances ... are proper subjects and matter of comment



and debate in Parliament'. Nonetheless, one should not conclude from this that Parliament was disputing the sovereignty of the king, or deliberately encroaching on his position. Subjectively, Parliament was merely defending its right to *participate* in the discussion of the more important issues of state policy, including those which, during the Tudor period, had still been viewed as the exclusive sphere of royal prerogative. This no doubt reflected the increasing boldness of the House of Commons with respect to the monarch, a boldness directly linked to the increasing financial dependence of the king on subsidies voted by Parliament.

The question might then be asked: if the House of Commons had become bold enough to demand that the monarch 'report' on matters which had traditionally been the prerogative of the Crown, where did the House of Commons find the arguments to support its thesis of 'encroachments' and 'innovations' on the part of the Crown? The answer lies in the fact that, with the development of both domestic and international life, there had arisen a broad complex of social relations and public interests previously unknown in the constitutional tradition which had regulated the boundaries of royal jurisdiction. The constitutional conflict which broke out between Parliament and the first Stuarts was over precisely this 'disputed area'. Finally, when noting the growing organization and boldness of the parliamentary opposition to absolutism during the political crisis of the 1620's, one should not forget one important fact: directly or indirectly, the boldness of the parliamentary orators who organized the resistance of the House of Commons to the claims of the early Stuarts reflected the increasing social discontent and protest in the town and the countryside, sometimes leading to open disturbances and rebellions. These included hunger rebellions, uprisings in connection with the loss by the poor of their traditional means of subsistence on Crownland, in certain counties, and on common land (the fens), either due to their sale in the first instance, or their drainage by private entrepreneurs in the second, and, thirdly, disturbances following the enclosure of common land. In the early 1620's, the rising price of bread led to revolts in Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Sussex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk. All told, around 40 riots were registered between 1585 and 1660. Reference has already been

made to the uprising in 1607 in protest against enclosures (the Midland revolt). The centre of this rebellion were the counties of Yorkshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, where the landowners made the largest encroachments on the communal rights of the peasants. When, in 1626-1632, the communal rights of the cotters living and working in royal forests came under attack, mass disturbances known as the Western rising broke out in the western counties. Finally, when our attention is caught by the decisive manner with which the Long Parliament dealt with the institutions serving as the instrument of royal absolutism, we should not forget that, in addition to all the other factors prompting these actions, there was not only the support which Parliament received in those critical days from the London populace, but also the mass peasant demonstrations against enclosures, which took place in on less than twenty-six counties.

Thus, when, in March, 1629, members of the opposition in the House of Commons obliged the speaker to stay in his seat, and hastily read out the declaration mentioned above, they well realized that what was involved was not an interruption of the session, but the dissolution of Parliament. Nor were they mistaken. This marked the beginning of eleven years (1629-1640) during which Charles I ruled without Parliament. At first it seemed as though absolutism had won the battle. The ranks of the opposition thinned, and the situation was further aggravated by dissensions. In 1633 Sir John Eliot died in the Tower. Sir Edward Coke, popular among the opponents to 'French-style' absolutism, died that same year. He had been a defender of common-law courts against 'encroachments' by Crown courts (the Star Chamber, the Chancery Court, etc.). Sir Thomas Wentworth, a prominent member of the opposition, went over to the king and became his close assistant and advisor. The basis of the policy which enabled Charles I to govern the country without Parliament (that is, to raise revenue without parliamentary subsidiaries), was laid, as we have already seen, during the ten years in which James I governed alone: the sale of titles and positions, fines for failure to assume the rank of knight, for violation of legislation against enclosures, for violation of forest laws, the trade in monopoly licences, forced loans and 'gifts', and tax manipulation. In years of peace, this enabled the king to meet his budget without

having recourse to parliamentary subsidiaries. This explains why the 'peaceful policy' of the first Stuarts appeared as a blessing for those who lived off the court, but in the eyes of zealous Protestants and opponents of absolutism it was 'the betrayal of national interests'. The latter bitterly criticized the court for its indifference to the fate of Protestantism in Europe, being decided on the battlefields of the Thirty Years' War.

Nonetheless, during the reign of Charles I, the financial needs of the court exceeded royal revenue even in years of peace. From 1631 to 1635, this revenue amounted to an average £600,000 per annum. However, the Exchequer debt reached £1 million. The reason was tax evasion. More and more merchants refused to pay the tonnage and poundage taxes not confirmed by Parliament. In its Remonstrance of 1629, the House of Commons had declared this tax unlawful, and had even prohibited its payment under threat of punishment. The king then placed his hopes on ship money—an ancient obligation on coastal counties to fit out a given number of ships for the defence of the realm, and converted in 1634 into a monetary payment. By 1635 the king was already demanding ship money from inland counties as well. If this plan had succeeded, the king would have had at his disposal a permanent tax covering the entire country, and would thus have freed himself once and for all from the need to convene Parliament. This danger was well noted by those who had remained loyal to the opposition. The case of John Hampden, a wealthy squire who refused to pay the tax, resounded through the whole country. During the judicial enquiry at a Crown court, the judge, Sir Robert Berkley, cynically remarked: 'I never read nor heard that *Lex* was *Rex*, but it is common and most true that *Rex* is *Lex*'. The decision of the court, which was, of course, for the Crown and against Hampden, had one other very important aspect, for it recognized the king's right to introduce tax to maintain the armed forces when he considered that necessary, that is, in effect, permanently. Contrary to the expectations of the court, the 'Hampden Affair' provoked mass opposition to the ship tax. Whereas in 1636, the receipts were only 3.5% short of the expected sum, in 1637 this figure had risen to 11%, and by 1638 it was 61%. Two advisors of the king—Thomas Wentworth, who had been given the title Earl of Strafford, and Archbishop Laud—in

a burst of devotion to the monarchy, inflamed two very serious sources of opposition to it in Ireland and Scotland.

As Lord Deputy of Ireland, Strafford imposed religious uniformity on the English model in this Catholic country. For this purpose he set up a court known as the High Commission, which imposed fines on recusants in order to ease the deficit of the London Exchequer. The same purpose lay behind the demand that landowners, officials, doctors, lawyers, etc. take the oath of allegiance to the king as head of the church. Failure to pay the fine or refusal to take the oath brought the threat of the confiscation of landed property (estates). On being warned of the danger of rebellion, Strafford cynically commented that the more rebels—the more confiscation. One of the ultimate aims pursued by the Lord Deputy was the creation in Ireland of a permanent armed force which could be used both for the internal government of the country and also, at the king's discretion, outside Ireland (the theory of the suppression of rebellion).

Strafford's policy in Ireland provoked the Irish rebellion of 1641, which proved to be the prelude to the civil war in England. Equally fatal for English absolutism was Laud's policy of imposing religious uniformity in Scotland. This posed a direct threat that Presbyterian Church organization, which had taken root in Scotland following the reformation, would be replaced by the Anglican Church system, which was characterized, as we have noted, by many elements of Catholic organization and liturgy. However, dangers of a religious nature were not the only reason behind the subsequent development of events. The nobility and gentry simply used this to express their discontent over a far more dangerous threat emanating from England. On the insistence of Charles I, the Scottish Parliament had passed a bill creating the legal basis for confiscating, on the will of the king as head of the church, the estates of those whose land had previously belonged to the church. They now decided to avail themselves of the dissatisfaction sweeping through broad sections of the population. In reply to Laud's attempts in 1637 to introduce the Anglican liturgy, the Scottish Presbyterians concluded a religious alliance—the National Covenant—and took to arms. It was here in Scotland, in the course of the Anglo-Scottish war of 1639-1640, that the first serious blow was delivered against English absolutism. Later, the Scottish

covenanters were to play a major role in the victories of the parliamentary forces during the first civil war in England itself. When, in 1639, the Scottish army entered the northern counties of England, its military superiority over the army of Charles I was apparent. The reason lay not only, on the Scottish side, in military leaders equipped with the experience they had gained on the battlefields of the Thirty Years' War (General David Leslie, et al.), but in the fact that the English army had been hastily recruited, was badly equipped and badly paid. However, the most striking feature of this situation was the rejoicing among the English opposition to the Crown at the defeat of the forces of Charles I. The Scottish victory was marked by fireworks in London. Military setbacks and lack of resources obliged Charles I to convene Parliament. It proved to be 'short' (13 April-5 May, 1640). Opening Parliament after a break of 11 years, Charles appealed to the 'national sentiments' of the members, and reviled the Scottish 'traitors'. To stir the patriotic feelings of Parliament, the secret correspondence between the Scots and the King of France was published. However, the leaders of the opposition indicated that, in their opinion, the main danger lay not in the 'treachery' of the Scots, but in the threat to English liberties and the freedom of Parliament from the king and his advisors. Instead of meeting the king's request to grant him subsidies to conduct the war against the Scots, the House of Commons began an examination of the main aspects of Charles' policy during the years in which he had ruled without Parliament, and then declared that unless reforms were carried through which would prevent any future abuse of royal prerogative, the House would refuse to vote any subsidies. After the dissolution of this rebellious Parliament, the position of Charles I became even more critical. The second 'episcopal war' against the Scots ended in the shameful defeat of the royal forces, and the Scots seized Newcastle and the north-east of England.

The situation was moving to a point where, unless the king recovered Parliament, the Crown would be unable to find a way out of its military and political crisis. This was the request made in an appeal to the king signed by twelve lords. Two armies were stationed in the north of England, and their support required far more than the Exchequer could supply. Recognizing that his position was hopeless, Charles I at last agreed to listen to the 'advice' now com-

ing even from his own retinue. In October there were fresh elections, and on 3 November, 1640, Parliament met for its first session. This Parliament was destined to be a long one, for with it there began, in effect, a new chapter in English history.

## THE REVOLUTION OF THE 1640's

In modern English-language literature on this subject, which does not accept the definition of the events of the 1640's as a 'bourgeois revolution', or even a 'revolution' of any kind, another solution has been found: they are termed 'the Civil War'. However, following medieval tradition, this refers not to a civil war between classes, but to a war either between different factions of *one and the same* class, or between court and country, etc. However, the supporters of this trend in modern English-language historiography then face not inconsiderable difficulties, a highly original solution to which has been found by Professor Aylmer, who has proposed his own periodization of events during the twenty years which concern us. Of the events between the convention of the Long Parliament and the beginning of the civil war, some are defined as 'reforms', others as 'revolts'. The first civil war is termed 'war', and only those events which took place between the end of the first civil war and the execution of Charles I (that is, 1646-1649) are defined as 'revolution'. As for the republic of 1649, as also the Protectorate, these are interpreted as 'post-revolutionary'.

Soviet historiography divides the English revolution of the mid-17th century into five stages: 1) the constitutional (peaceful) stage (3 November, 1640-22 August, 1642); 2) the first civil war (1642-1646); 3) the struggle to intensify the democratic content of the revolution (1646-1649); 4) the independent republic (1649-1653); 5) the Protectorate and the second republic (1653-1660). The most important feature of this periodization is that the periods enumerated constitute links in a single process of the rise and decline of social revolution, a process whose content can only be understood by taking into account the inter-class and intra-class contradictions at every stage. It is then not difficult to notice that, as one stage in the revolution de-

veloped into the next with the involvement of lower social strata on the parliamentary side, the democratic content increased. As their involvement was suppressed, the revolution degenerated. At the political level, the revolution developed from a conflict between the Crown and Parliament within the framework and on the basis of the constitution to the complete overthrow of the constitution and the battle between the gentry and the Levellers over the democratic organization of state power; at the social level it moved from the unilateral abolition of the feudal structure and land relations in favour of the landowners alone to the struggle waged by the Diggers to achieve the abolition of the landowning system and the conversion of the land into communal property, equally and freely available to those who wish to cultivate it with their own labour.

Let us look, if only briefly, at each of these stages of the revolution in order to identify its most characteristic features and thus be able to follow the internal logic of the main events.

### **The Constitutional Stage (1640-1642)**

The first measures taken by the House of Commons of the Long Parliament included the expulsion of monopoly owners and the impeachment of the king's chief advisors, above all Strafford, whom the members saw as their most dangerous enemy. The charges brought against him included: advising the king to use the Irish army against rebels in England and, having dealt with the leaders of the opposition, governing the country by methods typical of an absolutist regime. Charges were also brought against others who had held posts during the King's rule without Parliament. Some of them fled the country, others, including Archbishop Laud, were imprisoned in the Tower. It was they who bore the full weight of the hatred which Charles' policy had aroused among the opposition. In order to ensure itself against an unexpected order to disperse, the Long Parliament passed two important acts: the Triennial Act, which provided for the regular convention of Parliament every three years with or without the king's consent, and also an act prohibiting the dissolution of a given Parliament without its agreement. The court decision in the Hampden case was rescinded, and the collection of ship money forbidden, along with other taxes not

voted by Parliament (7 August, 1641). In place of the permission to collect it for a year, given to Charles I by the first parliaments of his reign, the Long Parliament demanded that permission be reconfirmed every two months. A special act abolished an important instrument of royal absolutism—the courts of royal prerogative: the Star Chamber, the Council of the North, and the Council in Wales (5 July, 1641). The same fate met the church court—the High Commission. Supporters of Puritanism, who had been subjected to cruel persecution under Charles I, were released from prison, including Prynne, Burton, Bastwick and Lilburne. Puritan ministers and preachers were harshly punished during the reign of Charles I. They were flogged at the pillory, their ears cut off, followed by imprisonment at the king's pleasure. It should be emphasized that the king's 'approval' of all these constitutional innovations (such unexpected 'pliancy' on the part of Charles I when contrasted against the 'hard line' of the preceding period of his rule) is explained not only, and not so much by his catastrophic financial position, further aggravated by the defeats in the war against the Scots, but above all by his fear in the face of the crowds of armed Londoners who appeared in front of the palace every time the 'consent' of the monarch was 'delayed'. The menacing nature of the behaviour of the London populace from the opening of the Long Parliament onward (which provided decisive support for the House of Commons in implementing the most important acts of the constitutional period of the revolution) was, for the king, the final and decisive argument in favour of 'approving' acts of Parliament. It also ended all hopes of governing the country in future along the lines of the 'French model', that is, without Parliament. That this conclusion has a valid historical basis is proved by the fate of Strafford, who was imprisoned in the Tower. It is a known fact that Charles I, 'on his royal word of honour', guaranteed Strafford's personal safety and property in the hope that the House of Lords would support him. However, when the House of Commons realized that the House of Lords was unlikely to pass sentence on him, it changed the procedure of impeachment (according to which it was the House of Lords that constituted the judicial tribunal) by passing a bill on treason (the Act of Attainder), under which the judicial investigation was replaced by the direct and rapid proce-



dure of voting on the sentence. When this bill was taken for royal consent, the King's manifest reluctance to send his advisor to the block was overridden by the thousands of Londoners who literally besieged Whitehall. In these circumstances, Charles I had little choice but to give way to Parliament, and Strafford was executed (6 April, 1641).

Now Parliament displayed generosity, and sufficient funds appeared in the Exchequer to pay the two armies of Scots and Englishmen stationed in the north, and send the soldiers home. Up to this historic moment, there was virtual unanimity in the House of Commons. However, the parliamentary debate on two documents (the Root and Branch Petition, and the Grand Remonstrance) revealed how deep were the differences once the discussions moved on to changes which went beyond the immediate threat to the very existence of Parliament. The Root and Branch Petition was put before Parliament in the name of the citizens of London, Middlesex and other counties and concerned the 'Catholic threat' within and without the country. Inside the country, the Petition declared, this threat came from archbishops and bishops with inclinations close to Catholicism. The Petition attacked lazy, lax and ignorant Anglican vicars who were not preaching 'divine truth'. Behind this rhetoric lay one undoubted truth — the upper Anglican clergy supported the absolutist claims of the monarchy, and hence the demand that these 'members of the clan of anti-Christ' be expelled from the church. When, at the beginning of 1641, Parliament began discussion of the Remonstrance, and then the Root and Branch Petition, the debates revealed how great were the disagreements between the major landowners and wealthy bourgeois on the one hand, and the gentry and middle bourgeois on the other. The first dreaded the triumph of the principle of equality and self-government which was to operate within the church if its episcopal organization was abolished. Sir Edmund Waller declared that the laws of England and the structure of the Church were mingled like wine and water. In these circumstances, the episcopacy was comparable to breached fortifications. If the populace was allowed to destroy it, then it would be revealed that Parliament could not refuse it anything. From this he drew a conclusion wholly in keeping with the logic of the propertied classes: if the episcopacy is destroyed, property owners must then take on the burden of defend-

ing their own property (from the claims of the poor), just as they had recently had to defend it against the claims of the king. At this stage in the proceedings, the bill was rejected.

The second of the above-named documents, the Grand Remonstrance, was the fruit of the work of a special parliamentary committee set up to review the state of the realm. In addition to this committee, the Long Parliament created five others: on trade, on religion, on grievances, on Ireland, and on the courts. The management of individual spheres of social life by means of parliamentary committees under the Long Parliament anticipated future ministries. Debate on the Remonstrance took place in an atmosphere of acute political tension and aggravated contradictions both between the Crown and Parliament, and within Parliament itself. The reasons were manifest. The king went to Scotland, hoping to convert his recent enemies into allies, a bulwark against the rebellious capital, or at least to secure the north in case of civil war. To this end Charles I recognized the inviolability of the Presbyterian Church structure in Scotland. This royal manoeuvre seriously disturbed the leaders of the parliamentary opposition, led by John Pym, a gentleman from Somerset. His role in the attack mounted by the Long Parliament on the royal prerogative during the period in question was so great that, as one of his opponents ironically noted, his signature lacked only the letter 'R' (Rex) on royal decrees. Plenipotentiary representatives were immediately dispatched to Scotland to 'accompany' the king on his journey. Their purpose was to keep Parliament informed on the king's political moves.

The atmosphere in London, and in the country as a whole, became even tenser with news of the rebellion in Ireland. There was political stratagem behind the magnified reports of thousands of Irish Protestants killed by the rebels, that the latter were acting in the name of the king, that they enjoyed the support of Queen Henrietta Maria, not to mention the Pope. Now the talk of an external Catholic threat, until only recently rather abstract, had become a reality. As a result, a situation which had been created by the English (Protestant) colonial policy in Ireland since the reign of Elizabeth I was now presented by the Puritans as a religious conflict, moreover with ethnic overtones. Many descendants of the medieval emigrants from Eng-

land to Ireland, who had often intermarried with the Irish—the so-called Anglo-Irish—were Catholics, not to mention the Irish themselves, fervent supporters of 'Roman idolatry'.

The Irish rebellion put on the agenda the need to create an armed force to suppress rebellion and, in connection with this, there arose the question of who—the King or Parliament—would have control of these troops. From this moment on it was relatively easy for Puritan circles to emerge in the role of true patriots warning against the threat of an invasion of England by an army of rebellious Catholics and, linked to this, the danger of a Catholic rebellion in England. As the court had long since been seen as virtually the centre of a papist plot, it did not require much effort to turn this propaganda against the retention by the king of his traditional powers, including the appointment of the Lord-Lieutenant in charge of the militia. If the question of financing the military expedition to Ireland provoked little argument—the wealthy of the City willingly agreed to issue signed loans, 'guaranteed' by future land confiscations in Ireland—the question of control over the armed forces remained open for some time. Such was the political situation in the country as the Grand Remonstrance was debated in Parliament. This major document of the initial period of the revolution set out, in the form of 'grievances' about 'the state of the country' resulting from the rule of Charles I, what was, in effect, the programme of the allied classes in the revolution as they saw it at this stage. Like the Root and Branch Petition, the Grand Remonstrance begins by noting a great danger hanging over the realm, and linked to the existence of a 'malicious party' seeking to subvert the religion, and also the laws and principles of government. The authors of the Remonstrance pointed to the 'pernicious designs' of this party to explain the Anglo-Scottish war, the Irish rebellion, and the constitutional conflict between the king and Parliament. In the appended Petition, the following demands were set forth: that the bishops be deprived of their votes and expelled from the House of Lords, and also that their authority over the lower clergy and other subjects of the realm be reduced. To this end, that there be a complete reform of the church and abolition of those 'novelties' introduced by the prelates—altars and thrones, statues and organs, stained glass and surplices. Running

through the whole of the Petition is concern for the inviolability of landed property, moveable property and income. It is indicative that the third paragraph of the Petition contained the demand that any royal land confiscated in Ireland following the suppression of the revolt should not be distributed. Thus the bourgeois-aristocratic bloc was seeking ahead of time to secure in its own hands the colonization of the 'Emerald Isle'. Finally, it is also revealing that, of the 204 articles in the Grand Remonstrance, the interests of the democratic lower classes were referred to only in a handful, and in formulations which pertained less to the interests of these lower classes than to those of their 'benefactors'—the employers and lords of the manor. Points 31 and 32 of the Grand Remonstrance, for example, briefly touched upon the question of enclosures; points 53 and 54 spoke of the bankruptcy of the cloth manufacturing industry, and the emigration of manufacturers to the Netherlands and New England. The debate in Parliament on the Grand Remonstrance again revealed the considerable differences among its members on questions fundamental to Puritan church and Puritan political doctrine. The House of Commons passed it by a majority of only 11 votes.

In the meantime, Charles I, who had returned from his journey to Scotland, decided to deliver a counter-blow by demanding the arrest of five leaders of the House of Commons and one peer. The commandant of the Tower, newly-appointed by the king, received the order to train the guns on London. In that critical hour the House of Commons appealed to London, and crowds of people filled the streets. On 11 December, a petition demanding the expulsion of the bishops from the House of Lords was put before that House. On 27 December, an armed crowd greeted bishops who had arrived for a parliamentary session with cries of 'Down with the bishops!' The following day only two bishops dared to come to Parliament to attend the session. The Lords demanded measures against the 'rebels', but the House of Commons refused. God forbid, warned Pym, the recognized leader of the majority, that the Commons weaken in any way the enthusiasm of the people. On 3 January, 1642, the Chief Justice appeared in Parliament with a demand for the arrest of the five members of the House of Commons, charged with treason against the

state (they included Pym and Hampden), but the House refused to hand them over. The following day the king, accompanied by 400 soldiers, came in person (contrary to tradition) to the House of Commons to arrest the five members, but, warned in advance, they had already left for the City. The House of Commons also left to continue its session there. On 5 January, the Mayor of London refused the king's request that the 'traitors' be handed over. The capital refused to obey the king. London during those days resembled an armed camp. Its squares and streets were, in effect, controlled by the populace. It was dangerous for any official or bishop to appear there, as they risked facing cries of abuse and mud-slinging. The king had little choice but to retire to the north of the country in order to gather his supporters for the armed suppression of the revolt. He left on 10 January, 1642. The next day the members of the House of Commons returned to Westminster, accompanied by thousands of Londoners. The London militia was entrusted with guarding Parliament.

On 1 June, 1642, the Presbyterian majority in Parliament made its last attempt to avoid civil war. Both houses sent Charles I, then in York, the so-termed 'Nineteen Proposals'. Leaving aside the 'petitions' for measures to be taken against Jesuits and papist priests, and also the demand that papist bishops be expelled from Parliament, the main obstacle clearly preventing the peaceful return of the king to London was the parliamentary ordinance to arm the militia (led by the Earl of Essex), as this was a direct violation of the previously undisputed royal prerogative to 'summon to arms' the militia and appoint the Lord-Lieutenant its commander. Parliament also demanded that the king disband the armed forces he had gathered in the north. Finally, Parliament insisted on a close alliance with the 'United Provinces' and other Protestant states to fight the papacy and Catholic states. The king totally rejected these 'peace proposals', seeing in them, not without reason, 'an attack upon the constitution and fundamental laws of the realm' (*Nolumus leges Angliae mutari*—'We do not wish to change the laws of England'). On 22 August, the royal standard was raised in Nottingham. It was a huge banner with the royal ensigns in the four corners, a crown in the centre, and a finger pointing 'from the heavens': 'To caesar what belongs to caesar'. This was the

declaration of a feudal war by the king against a rebellious 'feudal vassal', the Earl of Essex. Thus ended the constitutional stage of the revolution, and the civil war began.

### The First Civil War (1642-1646)

In the history of this stage, our interest will be focused not so much on the chronicle of military operations and the political events connected with them, as on the factors which decided the outcome of the most important of these operations and the civil war as a whole, the military strategy of Parliament. The first thing which attracts attention is the initial geographical localization of the Royalists on the one hand, and the parliamentary forces on the other, or, more precisely, the 'division' of the country into two camps. As we know, the northern and western counties sided for the most part with the king, while the southern and eastern counties supported Parliament. However, insofar as the first comprised regions which were economically backward, and in which the traditional social order (above all relations between the landowner and the tenant) was as yet little affected by the capitalist order, whereas the second comprised regions economically more developed precisely because traditional relations had been subjected to the transforming influence of the capitalist order, it is impossible not to see in this division into two camps preparing for armed conflict *objective evidence of the inter-class nature of the conflict.*

Any attempt to explain the choice of side at the level of individual families using this contradiction between the old and the new ('middle') social classes is, of course, a futile undertaking, since a number of factors caused this choice to deviate to one side or the other. Most of the top nobility and a considerable portion of the middle aristocracy supported the king, just as the majority of the commercial and entrepreneurial elements in the town and the countryside, and also the popular masses—where they were able to exercise any freedom of choice—supported Parliament. The fact that a considerable portion of the provincial aristocracy remained 'neutral' throughout the war is explained not only by their 'indifference' to the questions of high policy which so agitated Parliament, but also by apprehension in face of the unpredictable consequences of the war and, above

all, in face of the very fact that the democratic masses had been drawn into the conflict.

One thing is clear: no matter how confused, wittingly or unwittingly, was the account given in contemporary historiography of the reasons and character of the civil war in England in the 1640's, whatever the arithmetical or terminological attempts undertaken to that end, or simply to evade the issue altogether, the essence of this apparently 'constitutional' conflict, which then developed into the armed conflict of civil war, lay in the *fundamental* contradiction between a royal domestic and foreign policy conducted in the interests of the traditional feudal nobility (including the Church hierarchy), and the *vitally* important interests of the new social classes, the bearers of the capitalist order, whose interests they expressed. The first two years of the legislative activity of the Long Parliament revealed that the trading and entrepreneurial elements of the bourgeoisie and the most of new aristocracy representing their interests in Parliament were by this time strong enough to undertake a *legislative attempt to bring under their control the more important spheres of court policy*, traditionally considered to be the undisputed prerogative of the Crown. As has been aptly noted by the historian Aylmer, this was an attempt to bring down the monarch from his position as supra-class arbiter and autocratic head of the executive power (in exceptional circumstances also of the legislative), and turn him into yet another, 'additional' social estate (alongside the lords spiritual and temporal and the Commons). To be more exact, Parliament was claiming that all the most important issues of foreign and domestic policy be decided according to the formula: 'the Crown in Parliament'. Let the king continue to appoint to the highest posts in the realm, conclude treaties, etc., but all his decisions come into force only with the consent of Parliament.

At the same time, there can be no question that, notwithstanding the superiority in resources possessed by the alliance of the bourgeoisie and new aristocracy over their opponents, the Royalists, the decisive force on the side of the militant Parliament, and also its main support, were the masses. The town residents — mostly traders and craftsmen brought up in a spirit of self-management — were on the side of Parliament. Thomas May, a historian who specializes in the history of the Long Parliament, has

not failed to note the fact that the freeholders and yeomen of eastern England were on the side of Parliament. The preacher Baxter stressed the point that 'the greatest part of the tradesmen and freeholders and the middle sort of men, especially in those corporations and counties which depend on clothing and such manufactures', supported Parliament. It is worth noting that the populace did not always wait for an appeal by Parliament, but on many occasions acted on its own initiative. Such were the numerous demonstrations against enclosures, and also the iconoclastic movement which smashed 'idolatrous' furnishings inside the churches—stained glass windows, statues and organs—and expelled clergy who inclined to the Royalists. (As was to be expected, the Anglican clergy were on the side of the king.) The House of Lords demanded that extraordinary measures be taken to cope with the rebels. The House of Commons, though it verbally condemned such actions, did not hurry to take concrete measures.

Two stages can be clearly distinguished in the first civil war: 1) when the outcome of the conflict proved to be (despite the superiority of the parliamentary forces in resources, and its domination at sea) in favour of the king, usually due to the failures of the parliamentary military leadership, which was wholly in the hands of the Presbyterians; 2) when leadership of the parliamentary forces went to the Independents, who sought the quickest possible victory over the Cavaliers (as the parliamentary camp named the Royalists).

It should be noted that the division of forces at the national level took place slowly and patchily. Many things affected the process at the local level: the distance from London, family relations, land dependence and relations with the local landowner (desire to retain patronage) and, finally, personal sympathies and antipathies. It was only gradually that there emerged out of this combination of fortuitous factors that *class division* already referred to, which split the country into two hostile camps. By the autumn of 1642, a number of large and small focal points of revolution had appeared around the country, opposed in the majority of counties by a considerable number of counter-revolutionary focal points. The latter included not only castles and manor houses, but also some of the Anglican churches. In Canterbury Cathedral, for example, a royalist store of weapons and powder was discovered. In



the city of Chichester, the clergy actively assisted the Royalists to seize the local arsenal, and royalist cavaliers trained behind the cathedral walls. Militia detachments gathered everywhere—some following the instructions of the king, others carrying out the instructions of Parliament. This curious situation is well depicted in a report from St Albans in the summer of 1642: the courier brought three proclamations—one (from Parliament) on subordination to the commissars for recruitment into the parliamentary militia, another (from the king) prohibiting recruitment into the militia without the great seal of the king, and a third (from Parliament) forbidding the quartering of royalist cavaliers in the city. The local authorities often attempted to maintain neutrality, waiting to see which way events were going. To begin with, the war took the form of small-scale clashes between individual detachments trying to take possession of weapons' stores and strategic positions. Although the Royalists succeeded in drawing onto their side—particularly in the economically backward regions—a large number of dependent farmers, craftsmen and servants, nonetheless the aristocratic nature of their militia, particularly the cavalry, is beyond any doubt. This would later be remarked upon by Cromwell. As for the parliamentary militia, its primarily popular composition (including the cavalry) was also noted by contemporaries. During the first stage of the civil war, for example, the London militia especially distinguished itself. In 1642-1643, twenty thousand volunteers—men, women and children—erected a fortified ring around the city nine feet wide, eighteen feet high and sixteen miles long.

The first major conflict between the parliamentary forces (known as the Roundheads) and the Royalists (Cavaliers) took place on 23 October, 1642 at Edgehill; the second at Turnham Green in November. Although on both occasions the parliamentary militia not only successfully blocked the road to London against the king, but came close to defeating him, the commander-in-chief of the parliamentary forces, the Earl of Essex, purposely permitted the Royalists to leave the battlefield without suffering heavy losses. The king soon made use of this tactic, taking Oxford and turning it into his residence. Here there came from London the majority of the House of Lords and a considerable portion of the House of Commons. Altogether around 236 members of Parliament supported

the king. Thus ended the process of political division within the Long Parliament between the 'constitutional' Royalists (Falkland, Hyde and others) and the more resolute members (Pym, Hampden, Cromwell), which had made itself felt as far back as the debate on the Root and Branch Petition. In 1643, the London militia made a rapid march to the west of the country to relieve the besieged city of Gloucester. On the return journey, at the battle of Newbury (25 October), they literally saved the parliamentary forces from defeat by standing firm in face of the royalist cavalry under the command of Prince Rupert. The parliamentary cavalry had been destroyed by a powerful royalist cavalry charge. Finally, it is a well-known fact that, during the second stage of the war, the decisive force in the parliamentary army was the cavalry under the command of Oliver Cromwell, and recruited mainly from among the freeholders of the eastern counties.

The beginning of the civil war, however, required that Parliament answer the central question of the ultimate goal of its policy, and how this goal was to be achieved without harming the interests of those strata of society whom Parliament directly represented. It then turned out that the Presbyterian majority in the House of Commons feared a victory over the king, as this might unleash the revolutionary initiative of the populace in the town and the countryside, who had already grown bold 'beyond measure'. In addition to numerous instances in which the fences around enclosed common land had been broken down, many manors had registered refusals to pay the church tithe and, not infrequently, the land rent. In a number of towns, including London, pressure from below had led to coups in which the ruling royalist oligarchy had been replaced by people from less prosperous and more democratic sections of the population.

In these circumstances, the revolutionary spirit of the Presbyterian majority in Parliament rapidly evaporated. John Hotham, who, together with his father, had resisted the king when he had attempted to seize the arsenal in Hull (1642), then changed sides. He explained his action as follows: 'No man that hath any reasonable share in the commonwealth can desire that either side should be conqueror... It is too great a temptation to counsels of violence'. He feared lest 'the necessitous people of the whole kingdom will presently rise in mighty numbers and

... set up for themselves to the utter ruin of all the nobility and gentry'. The motives behind the clear desire on the part of the Presbyterians to limit the military conflict with the king to purely defensive tactics, while simultaneously seeking ways of reconciliation with him, were clearly expressed by none other than the commander-in-chief of the parliamentary forces, the Earl of Essex, in 1644: 'Is this the liberty which we claim to vindicate by shedding our blood?... Posterity will say that to deliver them from the yoke of the king we have subjugated them to that of the common people'. Hence the parliamentary tactic of this period: better to secure minimal acceptable concessions in the course of peaceful negotiations than win victory with the help of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the common people attired in military uniform. (Attempts by Parliament to reach agreement with the king continued throughout the whole of the civil war: in 1643, 1644, 1645 and 1646.)

As a result of the essentially defeatist tactic of the Earl of Essex in the south, and the Earl of Manchester in the east, by the end of the military campaign of 1643 the military position of the parliamentary forces was critical: almost the whole of the north and west of the country, three quarters of the total territory, was in the hands of the Royalists. The Waller army had ceased to exist, Essex had no more than 5-6 thousand men. The army of the Eastern Association was slow to take shape, and its commander-in-chief, the Earl of Manchester, was doing all he could to hinder any action against the king. In this situation the Presbyterian majority in Parliament, not wanting either to unleash the revolutionary initiative of the masses, yet also fearing the consequences of a royal victory, took the only possible course. In September, 1643 they concluded a military alliance with Scotland. In exchange for military assistance against Charles I, Parliament signed 'The Solemn League and Covenant', according to which they undertook to introduce Presbyterian church organization in England in place of the Anglican (that is, a system similar to the one in Scotland).

In January, 1644, a Scottish army of 20 thousand entered English territory. In July of that same year, at the battle of Marston Moor, the parliamentary forces (the Scots, the Yorkshire militia under the command of Thomas Fairfax, and the militia of the eastern towns—the

Eastern Association—in which the decisive role was played by Cromwell's cavalry) delivered a crushing defeat on the Royalists. However, it was still a long way to final victory. Having lost the north of the country to the Parliamentarians, the Royalists compensated by victories in the south-west, where the army of Essex was defeated in September, 1644. The forces of the king were again threatening London, and it was only then that Parliament adopted the 'Self-Denying Ordinances' (April, 1645), as a result of which members of both Houses lost their posts in the army (an exception was made for Oliver Cromwell). Following the departure of the Presbyterian commanders, the decisive role thereafter in the conduct of the war on the parliamentary side went to the Independents. In the political sphere, the increased influence of the Independents in Parliament during the first civil war expressed itself in the execution of Archbishop Laud in January, 1645, after more than three years' imprisonment in the Tower. In October, 1646, the episcopal organization of the Church was abolished. The New Model Army was created at about the same time, and was financed from state funds. The results were not slow to follow: in the battle of Naseby (14 June, 1645), the New Model Army won a decisive victory over the Royalists. From then on the struggle took the form of more or less local operations to put down individual sources of resistance. In June, 1646, the parliamentary forces entered Oxford, the headquarters of Charles I. The king himself had fled north, to the Scottish army. Thus the first civil war ended with the total victory of Parliament thanks to the unstinting mass heroism of the peasants and the town craftsmen dressed in soldiers' uniforms.

### **The Struggle to Deepen the Democratic Content of the Revolution**

The victory of Parliament in the first civil war could not but arouse tense expectations in the most diverse sections of the population (in some—coloured with fear, in others—with hopeful anticipation) as to what would Parliament do, now that it was the master of the life of the nation?

First of all it should be stressed that the war, with its sieges, battles, attacks and counter-attacks, plunder, requisitioning, billeting of troops, forcible conscription and

considerable losses could not but inflict tangible damage on agriculture, manufacture and trade. Those who suffered most from the consequences of war were low-paid farm labourers, craftsmen, those previously employed in manufacture and now without work, and farmers who had lost their harvests and their livestock. It would be appropriate to note here that in 1644-1645, as a result of the depavations of war, an anti-war movement known as the clubmen emerged among the peasants, particularly in the south-western counties. They organized armed groups to prevent both royalist and parliamentary forces from entering their villages. To these disasters caused by the war were added three consecutive years of bad harvest (1647-1649). The price of bread rose to such an extent that thousands of poor could not afford it. Beggars collecting alms filled the towns and villages.

How did the Long Parliament dispose of the fruits of victory? Objectively speaking, its policy was reduced to satisfying the main demands of those classes which it represented, and remaining *absolutely* deaf to the needs and aspirations of those democratic masses whose sufferings, sacrifices and courage on the battlefield had given them the victory over the Royalists. The trading and entrepreneurial strata had been freed from the hated system of monopolies (in part abolished by parliamentary decision, and then swept away with the beginning of the civil war); unrestricted freedom in trade and manufacture now triumphed throughout the land. For their part, the major landowners had been freed from the material obligations and juridical restrictions of knighthood. By an ordinance of Parliament (February, 1645-1646), this type of holding was abolished without compensation, together with the Court of Wards and Liveries. As a result, landowners who had held their land as feudal tenants-in-chief now became freeholders, that is, *in effect*, private landowners. The importance of this measure is shown by the willingness of Parliament, in 1610, to pay £200,000 annually to the king in exchange for his consent to abolish knightly holdings. Even more revealing in this respect is the fact that this act was not only repeated under Cromwell's Protectorate, but confirmed in law after the restoration of the lawful monarch. It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of this one-sided abolition of the feudal system of land-ownership in favour of the major landowners. If the social,

economic and legal consequences of this act are not taken into consideration, it is difficult to explain the specific features of the social history of post-revolutionary England in general, and the history of the English peasantry in particular.

The taxation policy of Parliament was also implemented in favour of the same social groups. The civil war required that exceptional financial measures be taken by Parliament. First of all, the estates of all well-to-do Royalists were sequestered, and their revenue appropriated by the Exchequer. As for the estates of the so-called 'delinquents'—those who had taken active part in the war on the side of the king—they were subject to fines, and if the fines were not paid, the estate was confiscated and sold. A great deal of land was sold by the Royalists themselves to pay the fines, termed impositions. They numbered more than 3 thousand, and paid around £1.5 million to a parliamentary committee (the Committee for Compounding) specially created for this purpose. In addition, the lands and revenue of Crown and Church were also confiscated, the total value (that is, annual revenue) amounting to £4 million. Perkin, a modern English historian, has described this as a decisive turning-point in English history, which distinguished it from continental history and determined all the other specific features of English society.

However, the sale of such a huge amount of land, now in the possession of Parliament, shortly after the execution of the king (January, 1649) did not lead to an agrarian revolution, the result of which would have been to increase the proportion of small-scale farmers at the expense of large-scale landowners. The large estates were not divided up into holdings which, particularly given favourable terms, could have been within reach of the less prosperous. In other words, following the sale of large amount of land confiscated from delinquents, the Crown and the Church, *the structure of English agriculture remained almost exactly as it had been prior to the revolution*. As a result of the agrarian legislation of the revolution, the manorial estate and tenancy remained the most characteristic feature of the agrarian system. If, for a time, there was any change at all, it was merely more frequent instances of a change in the lord of the manor. These now comprised first of all parliamentary creditors and the urban wealthy, particular-

ly from London, and also the prosperous gentry who had fought on the side of Parliament. The members of Parliament also did not forget themselves and their proteges in the capital and the provinces. For these purchasers of confiscated land, very advantageous prices were set, not infrequently payable in installments. Moreover, many parliamentary representatives involved in these sales also profited from them. Nonetheless, Parliament suffered from an acutely inadequate regular revenue. This led to the imposition of extraordinary taxes (for instance, the so-called monthly tax). However, they were raised in such a manner that the wealthy paid less than their share, and the poor were overtaxed. Suffice it to mention the excise-duty, a kind of tax added to the price of a whole range of commodities, including certain essentials (beer, meat, salt, soap, etc.). The main burden of this tax inevitably fell on the broad mass of the common people. And what did they gain from the victory which they had achieved on the field of battle? In terms of the material conditions of their life, their social status and official position, the answer can only be: *nothing at all*. Take, for example, the copyholders, the single largest group within the English peasantry as a class, who dreamt of converting their holding if not into freehold, then at least into land held in perpetuity and protected in law against the arbitrary actions of the lord of the manor (fixed annual rent and fixed entry fines). The ordinance which abolished knightly holdings declared that copyhold remained unchanged. This meant that *the copyholders were, in effect, being handed over to the mercy of the landowners*. Their legal and actual position deteriorated with the change of landowner that followed the sale of land confiscated by Parliament. The new owners everywhere refused to take account of the customs which had previously operated on these lands. Having paid cash for the estate, the new lord saw himself as its outright owner, entitled to dictate his new conditions to the tenants, or else to act on the principle: 'let them leave the manor'. It was not for nothing, as one contemporary remarked, that the tenants living on land that had previously belonged to the Crown and the Church, felt towards those who purchased it such powerful feelings of hatred as only men can feel, for these purchasers are everywhere the greatest tyrants, such as only men can be, depriving their tenants of all the former immunities and liberties which they enjoyed

under the previous owners. Although one should not, as does the author of these lines, exaggerate the former immunities and freedoms, it is nonetheless an indisputable fact that the position of copyholders and small-scale leaseholders worsened everywhere on the large estates which changed hands.

Finally, those Royalists who agreed to 'buy back' their estates from Parliament by paying the impositions, transferred the whole burden of these payments onto their tenants and, once again, onto those whose rights no one in fact protected—the copyholders and small-scale leaseholders, not to mention those tenants whose tenure on manorial land depended solely on the 'good will' of the lord of the manor.

With the victory of Parliament, Tudor legislation against enclosure, which financial considerations had given a new lease of life during the 1620's, came to an end. Although peasant opposition to enclosure intensified everywhere, nonetheless during the years of parliamentary rule the enclosure of common land increased, particularly on confiscated estates auctioned off by Parliament. As has already been noted, the civil war impoverished many small-scale tenants and craftsmen, leaving those who had worked for middlemen without employment and swelling the ranks of the poor. To these were added many families who had lost the bread-winner on the battlefield, and those who returned home invalids. The numerous petitions sent to Parliament on this issue nonetheless failed to oblige Parliament to debate it, nor, needless to say, to pass any legislation easing the lot of this vast section of the population. From now on all concern for 'their' poor was the duty of the parish, which in nine cases out of ten refused 'poor relief' both to individuals and to entire families on the argument that they were 'strangers'.

Thus the victory of Parliament in the civil war brought no relief of any kind to the thousands of poor in town and countryside who had patiently awaited it during the years of warfare. Finally, nothing whatsoever changed in the socio-legal position of the lower classes. As before, the right to elect to Parliament was restricted, in the countryside, to freeholders with a minimum annual income of 40s, and in the towns to a narrow circle of full members of town corporations (freemen) in some cases, and in others—to tax-payers. As a result, not only copyholders



and leaseholders, farm and day labourers, but also the broad masses of the urban lower classes, i.e. 90% of the adult male population, remained outside the officially recognized 'people of England', that is, those officially represented in Parliament. The courts and judicial system remained likewise unaltered (with the exception of the prerogative courts and the High Commission, abolished by the Long Parliament), leaving untouched its expensiveness, corruption and bureaucracy, as also the wholly archaic legal system, excessively complex and conducted in a language (Latin) unknown to the mass of the people.

However, while it deceived the aspirations of the broad democratic masses at this stage, the revolution nonetheless opened up for them, objectively, not a few possibilities to develop their awareness and awake from their political lethargy. One factor assisting this process was the greatly increased geographical mobility of the population. Marches, the lengthy billeting of parliamentary troops, recruited mainly in the south and east of the country, facilitated the spread of ideas in the northern and western counties by popular preachers wearing a soldier's uniform. Moreover, during the war religious tolerance won the upper hand, despite the fact that, according to the agreement concluded by the Long Parliament with the Scottish Covenanters, Parliament had pledged to introduce the Presbyterian system (legally confirmed only in 1646) as the officially recognized Church. This and freedom of the press enabled previously illegal popular sects to preach their ideas by spoken and printed word. The dominant social thrust of these teachings can be judged by the tract eloquently entitled 'Gangraena' (1646), written by Thomas Edwards, a persecutor of radical sectaries. Among the various heresies and blasphemies preached by the radical sects, he mentions the following: 'By natural birth all men are equally and alike born to like property, liberty and freedom'. By the word 'freedom' contemporaries of the revolution meant immunities, liberties and privileges.

Not surprisingly, the radical sects became a school of self-organization for the popular masses (including soldiers and junior officers in the New Model Army), and a way of expressing both their protest against the existing legal order, and their ideals of what was right and just.

With the end of the first civil war, the country had four more or less organized social forces: Parliament, the City,

the Army and the Levellers. From the point of view of their religious orientation, the first two were primarily representatives of Presbyterianism, the last two—the Independents. However, paradoxically, the religious division between them (as regards the propertied classes) was very mobile and unclear. There were Presbyterians among the Independents, as they supported the preservation of a Church organized at the national level, while many of the Independents supported an oligarchic organization of the religious community, in this instance proving to be Presbyterian. One can only say that the Independents, in contrast to the Presbyterians, allowed for a wide range of tolerance (within the framework of Christianity). However, this alone is insufficient to understand the political situation which emerged in the country after the military victory over the king. In reality, the Independent movement was even less socially homogeneous. Alongside the middle and small-scale gentry, this wing also embraced the lower classes, both within and outside the army. Unlike the former, the 'silken Independents' or 'grande'es', the latter supported full independence in matters of belief and organization, and democratic Church communities. More precisely, any form of association of Church communities could take place only on a voluntary basis, that is, excluding any coercion and subordination. In political matters, they stood for *a continuation of the revolution in order to deepen the democratic content of its achievements*. In the struggle to achieve these aims at the new stage of the revolution, when a split had occurred within the Independent camp itself due to differing socio-class aspirations, the initiative moved to the popular masses, and the 'silken Independents' became for the moment the 'manoeuvring centre', whose interests were expressed by the Levellers on the one hand, and on the other—at least from the spring of 1647—by the soldiers and junior army officers who came under their influence.

Thus for the Presbyterians the revolution was essentially complete. If the king would only agree to leave control over the militia with Parliament, at least for a three more years, and would not object to a Presbyterian church structure, the City merchants were prepared to welcome him with all due ceremony into the capital. This presupposed, of course, that official political doctrine would continue to be based on the concept of the ancient 'freedoms'

and 'privileges' of Parliament, to which, together with the king, belongs sovereign power in the land, and the theory that, thanks to 'election by the people', Parliament alone has the right to speak in the name of the English people. In short, the demand for a system based on constitutional monarchy was to remain unchanged. It is clear that the second was directed not so much against the king as against the threat from the left—attempts to set against Parliament a political programme drawn up outside Parliament in the name of the people.

In the socio-political sense the revolution was also essentially complete in the eyes of the 'silken Independents'. For them, too, the Long Parliament was the only institution with the right to formulate the principles of the future political system. What still concerned them was, firstly, the degree of religious tolerance which would be permitted after the king had recognized Presbyterianism as the state religion and, secondly, the guarantees for those who had taken part in the civil war on the side of Parliament. In a word, leaving aside the ambitions of the Independents among the army commanders, headed by Oliver Cromwell, and also their fear that they would lose their political influence, the differences separating the Independent wing from the Presbyterian majority in Parliament were not so fundamental as to be insuperable. *The real division* in the revolutionary camp *at this stage* lay between the Presbyterians and the 'silken Independents' on the one hand, and the more radically-minded wing of Independents headed by the Levellers on the other. It was the Levellers who, in these circumstances, gave *more adequate expression to the discontent* among the popular masses with the socio-political results of the parliamentary victory in the civil war. This is confirmed by the clear awareness, which appeared in Leveller writings, of the class antagonism underlying the intensifying political crisis in the country. In 1647, for example, the Leveller Clarkson wrote: 'Who are the oppressors but the nobility and gentry ... and who are the oppressed, if not the yeoman, the farmer, the tradesman and the like?' The recognized leaders of the Levellers were John Lilburne, William Walwyn, Richard Overton and others.

In October, 1645, in a pamphlet entitled 'England's Birth-Right Justified', Lilburne had attacked the arbitrary actions of Parliament, which had resorted to the same

methods of 'government' — or, more accurately, of ignoring the interests of the common people — as had previously marked rule by the king (arrests without charges, forcible conscription into the army, arbitrary taxation, etc.). All of this was possible, Lilburne argued, only because there was no codification of the laws operating in the country. Thus he advanced an idea which was to become central to the programme of the Levellers, namely, the need to set down the basic rights of citizens as natural and inherent rights, and therefore standing above any power in the country. By the summer of 1646, the main constitutional demands of the Levellers had taken shape. The 'Remonstrance of many thousand citizens and other free-born People of England to their own House of Commons' (July, 1646) contained a comprehensive programme for the democratic stage of the revolution: 1) the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords; 2) the sovereignty of the House of Commons; 3) the responsibility of this House to its electors, the people of England; 4) annual elections to Parliament; 5) unrestricted freedom of conscience; 6) constitutional guarantees against the abuse of state power by setting down the native, inalienable and absolute rights of citizens. We are your Principals, and you our Agents, declared the authors of the Remonstrance in their petition to the House of Commons, thereby advocating the principle of the sovereignty of popular power, which was therefore the source of all legitimate authority. The authority enjoyed by Parliament was not only granted temporarily, 'delegated', but also strictly limited by the native rights of citizens, which do not come under its legislative authority since they are inalienable and not subject to Parliament. The 'free-born' — this was the group of people to whom the Levellers ascribed these inalienable rights, denying not only feudal privileges 'by birth', but also the Presbyterian-Independent concept of the people as those possessing a specific juridical status (freeholders), and a minimum income of 40s a year. Richard Overton, one of the leaders of the Levellers, wrote: 'I am confident that it must be the poor, the simple and mean things of this earth that must confound the mighty and strong'. Following the publication of the Macpherson's 'The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism' (1962), a discussion began in historiography about the group of people who, according to the Levellers, should be recognized as 'free-born', that is, en-

titled to vote in parliamentary elections. We would agree with those who argue that the Levellers inclined – not without vacillation – to exclude from this group of men (women did not enter into the argument) those who lost the status of 'free-born' due to poverty (living on poor relief), and servants who were paid for their services and lived under the roof of their 'benefactor'.

Another reflection of this same fundamental dividing-line in the revolutionary camp was the conflict between the army and Parliament. We cannot here go into the details of this conflict, which arose in the spring of 1647 as a result of attempts by Parliament to free itself of an army which constantly menaced its absolute power. Thus emerged the plan to discharge the greater part of the soldiers, and send the rest to Ireland to put down the rebellion. We shall point only to the fact that in the course of this conflict a kind of 'dual authority' arose within the army itself: the power of the so-called 'agitators' chosen by the soldiers and junior officers, and the power of the senior officers led by Cromwell. The Army Council, set up on the initiative of Cromwell (and including agitators and officers) with the aim of annulling the influence of the agitators within the army, also became for a time a political counter-balance to the Presbyterian majority in Parliament, while simultaneously helping, as has already been noted, to ensure that the positions of command remained with the 'grandees'. The emergence of a democratic organization within the army in the form of the 'agitators' inspired the lower classes in London and the counties to write a series of petitions demanding an end to the tithe, to copyholder fines and to enclosures. According to one contemporary, Clement Walker, this was equivalent to abolishing the monarchy, 'since it is impossible for any prince to be a king only of beggars, tinkers and cobblers'. For this same purpose the Army Council was convened in Putney (28 October, 1647). By this time, two programmes for the future political structure of the country had been drawn up in opposition to the plans of the Presbyterians: the 'Heads of the Proposals', drawn up by the top officers, and 'The Case of the Army' by the Levellers, which laid the foundations of 'The Agreement of the People'. The main difference between them was that the first could not envisage the political system of the country without a monarch and a House of Lords. In this sense, the aspirations

of the officers differed little from the plans of the Presbyterians. The *grande*es also proposed to retain the basic elements of the traditional constitution as regards electoral rights. Apart from redrawing some of the boundaries of electoral constituencies to bring them more in line with the population of the counties and corporative towns, the entire electoral system remained as before, that is, excluding nine tenths of the population from the vote.

In contrast to the 'Heads of the Proposals', the Levellers' 'Agreement of the People' was, in the circumstances of the day, a programme envisaging a far more democratic system for the country, and granting the right to vote to a very broad section of *small-scale, self-employed workers in the town and the countryside*. If the 'silken Independents' (not to mention the Presbyterians) were monarchist, the Levellers at their conference in Putney supported an essentially republican system with a unicameral Parliament as the supreme organ of power, and legally recognized 'inalienable' rights for citizens as a guarantee against any abuse of the power delegated to Parliament. The Levellers also supported (albeit not consistently) the principle of universal male suffrage. At meetings of the Army Council in Putney, Colonel Thomas Rainborough supported this principle: 'I thinke that the poorest hee that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest hee; and therefore ... I think itt's cleare, that every man that is to live under a Government ought first by his owne consent to putt himself under that Government'. Exactly the same point of view was supported by the Leveller Petty. Even if one allows for the fact that the more moderate Leveller ideologists Lilburne and Wildman supported a narrower interpretation of the term 'free-born', the implementation of 'The Agreement of the People' would have doubled the number of those enjoying the franchise.

The main historiographic difficulties encountered in trying to define the Levellers' interpretation of the term 'free-born' are generated by the vagueness of the social position of those whom they describe as 'servants'. Were they calling for the exclusion of all those who received wages, that is, hired workers as such, or only 'servants' in the personal service of another? It would seem that of these possible interpretations, the second is closer to the truth.

As subsequent events revealed, the fact that the 'silken Independents' agreed to discuss 'The Agreement of the People' at a meeting of the Army Council was merely a tactical move undertaken because of the broad support which 'The Agreement' received in the army, and the danger that it would refuse to obey its officers. One cannot deny the considerable skill in political manoeuvring and manipulating displayed by Cromwell and his companions.

The main historical role played by the Levellers at this stage in the revolution was that they voiced the ideas of republicanism based on formal legal principles of popular power (even if the conditions of the day restricted the understanding of this concept), and thus indicated the way to achieve a deepening of the democratic content of the revolution. Their political influence in the army is illustrated by the second civil war, which broke out in the autumn of 1648. If the conspiracy against the revolution mounted by the king (who had escaped imprisonment and fled to the Isle of Wight) and the Scots (supported by a royalist rebellion in England itself) was quickly and crushingly defeated, this was thanks only to the 'left bloc' tactic of the 'silken Independents', who allied with the Levellers to oppose the common enemy. Obviously, if the Levellers had not enjoyed the backing of a genuine political force in the army and among the democratic lower classes, such a tactic would have been meaningless.

The victory of the parliamentary army in the second civil war, when Parliament itself was continuing (in violation of the previously agreed decision) to seek to make peace with the king at any price, made it inevitable that the army would not only enter the capital a second time, but also purge Parliament of those Presbyterians most hostile to it (Pride's Purge). Even when the 'silken Independents' enjoyed an absolute majority in the House of Commons, republicanism still did not become the core of their political ideology. If it was the leader of the grandees, Oliver Cromwell, and his companions who nonetheless organized the public trial of Charles I and his public execution, this was only because they were forced to this extremity by their total inability to convince him to change from a king ruling 'by divine right' into a king ruling 'by parliamentary right'.

## The Republic of 1649 and the Protectorate of Cromwell

The execution of Charles I, the abolition of the House of Lords and the proclamation of a republic were the last steps which the 'silken Independents' were obliged to take along the road of revolution. It is worth noting that the word 'republic' was not used in the Act itself. Instead the formula employed was 'Commonwealth', that is, 'the state of general well-being'. They were taken under the direct pressure of the populace, whose aspirations were represented in the army, as well as in the movement known as the 'civilian Levellers' in London, and also many of the counties.

However, having given way to this pressure, the grantees, who now had the political initiative in their hands, did all they could to ensure that this republic would be, in effect, a 'monarchy without a king' or—which is the same thing—'a republic without a republic', that is, a republic simply in name. Its constitutional system differed radically from the projects of the Levellers as set out in 'The Agreement of the People'. The fact that the 'rump' (the scornful name given to what was left of the original House of Commons after Pride's Purge) of the Long Parliament took all legislative power to itself, and that executive power was given to the Council of State appointed mainly from among its own members, made no essential difference to the social policy, nor to the administration of justice, nor to the electoral system by which the next parliament was to be elected. The copy of 'The Agreement of the People' which was handed to Parliament in December, 1648, after being 'edited' by the officers was filed away and forgotten. Not without reason did the Levellers accuse the senior officers of 'machinations' and 'deliberate treachery', of having *'stolen' the idea of a republic and then done everything possible to use it as a cover for oligarchic tyranny*. However, the very fact that such a 'substitution' was possible reveals not only the cunning and treachery of the 'silken Independents', but also the organizational weakness, political immaturity and socially restricted scope of the programme of change proposed by the Levellers themselves. Insofar as this programme left in place the main prop of the social system—the manor and tenancy—it was unable to mobilize the mass of the peasants. This was probably the main



weakness on the side of the Levellers. Meanwhile the name 'Levellers' given to this party by its enemies frightened and repelled the middle sections of the urban and rural population, who found its programme odious. As a result, when several army divisions rose in revolt against the Independent republic in May, 1649, there was no open support for them either in the countryside or the towns, and therefore, not surprisingly, this army rebellion under the banner of the Levellers was suppressed with relative ease. In addition to the relatively well-organized secular forms of open discontent among the common people with the regime of the Independent republic, there were also religious forms, expressed through radical sects. One which became fairly widespread was the sect of Ranters, who believed in the 'universal salvation' of those who believed in Christ. This doctrine led to the belief that those who enjoyed God's blessing could not 'fall from grace', and therefore could not be judged by their fellow-men for their actions. There can be no question but that this open rejection of 'human laws' (including 'legal' forms of marriage) by the Ranters was a protest by the common people against the socially unjust nature of these laws and the authorities behind them. It is equally beyond doubt that, on the pretext of opposing the licence of the supporters of this sect, the republican authorities were removing the threat it posed to property. The Ranter Abiezer Coppe, for example, wrote in 1650: 'The true communion amongst men is to have all things common and to call nothing one hath one's own'.

The peak of the struggle by the popular masses to achieve a further democratization of the content of the revolution was the True Levellers' movement under Gerard Winstanley, which emerged in the wake of the Levellers. The True Levellers' movement clearly revealed the political awareness of the most deprived sections of the population, the plebeian elements in the town and countryside. It was also a desperately bold attempt to give fresh impetus to revolutionary change in the country. Instead of sending complaints and petitions to Parliament, they moved to direct action to achieve the practical realization of their aims. The fact that the Independent republic behaved like a ruthless dictatorship of the powers-that-be towards various democratic movements, including radical sects such as the Ranters, meant that it was repelling and

mercilessly suppressing the political activity of precisely those social forces which alone, subjectively speaking, were convinced ideological adherents of the very idea of republicanism, and which, objectively speaking, were its most reliable social basis.

On the other hand, the defeat of the petty-bourgeois, radical-plebeian democracy embodied in the 'political' Levellers' movement revealed its extreme political immaturity, which made it incapable of seizing leadership in the revolution, even at its height, from the bourgeois-aristocratic bloc. The True Levellers' movement was even less capable of doing so, though they were the most consistent revolutionaries in terms of their objectives, their programme combining the abolition of the landowners' monopoly on land in favour of the peasantry as a class, with the idea of a radical reorganization of society on the basis of collective labour on communal land and communal consumption of the product. In proclaiming the objective conditions for liberating hundreds of thousands of poor, deprived of the means of existence, the True Levellers, alone among the republican ideologists, realized that the stability of the republic was directly related to the system of landownership. The preservation of this system pronounced silent sentence on the republic. However, as the True Levellers appealed to the rural and urban plebs, still absolutely unprepared for independent political action, their movement, despite the objective depth and insight of its programme, never approached anything like a mass movement of the poor, but remained merely an episode in the history of the revolution, much admired by later generations.

In the meantime the Independent republic, wholly indifferent to the needs of the mass of the populace, remained deaf to the demands which not infrequently made themselves heard among the 'silken Independents', and which included the abolition of the church tithe, reforms in the administration of justice, the simplification and codification of existing laws, and the abolition of copyhold.

The republic was very active, however, in the sphere of foreign policy, which was entirely dictated by bourgeois-aristocratic interests. There was a military expedition to Ireland, led by Cromwell, which bloodily suppressed the rebellion against English rule, and enabled the passing of the Act for the Settlement of Ireland (1652), under which

two thirds of landed property was confiscated. The bulk of the Irish were forcibly deported to the barren land of Connaught. The large expanses of land now at the disposal of the 'rump' went mainly to City merchants—parliamentary creditors, members of the 'rump' Parliament and senior officers. As for the ordinary soldiers and junior officers, who, together with many months' back pay, also received 'deheuferes' (entitlement) to landholdings in Ireland, the majority of them sold their holdings cheaply, for the most part to their own officers, as they lacked the resources necessary to turn the land into a cultivated farm. As a result, the landowning system which dominated in England was confirmed and expanded in Ireland. It was not without reason that Marx noted that 'the English republic under Cromwell met shipwreck in Ireland'.<sup>4</sup>

The 1649 republic also found the forces necessary for two military campaigns (1650 and 1651) against Scotland in which it inflicted crushing defeats (at Dunbar and at Worcester) on the Scottish troops, leading, as with Ireland, to its unification with England. Although no mass confiscation of land followed in this instance, the occupation regime was sufficiently harsh.

Finally, the republic's policy proved to be quite sensitive to the foreign policy requirements of the capitalist order. The two Navigation Acts (1650 and 1651) were intended to protect the interests of English merchants and ship-owners against Dutch competition. These acts granted entry to English ports only to British ships or ships of the country of origin of the product. The majority of the crew were to be Commonwealth subjects. This stimulated English merchant fleet and ended the Dutch monopoly on the transport of goods of foreign (that is, non-Dutch) origin. In more simple terms, these two acts led to the first Anglo-Dutch war of 1652-1653.

By the autumn of 1651, eleven years had passed since the Long Parliament was first elected. The remaining 'rump' (a maximum of 200 members in the House of Commons still retained their seats, with less than 100 on average attending sessions of the House) was in no hurry, however, to dissolve itself, or to set any limit on its own duration. It was not until 1651 that such a date was set—3 November, 1654. The huge sums collected by means of taxes, subsidies, excise and customs were insufficient to cover the expenses of military campaigns (Ire-

land and Scotland), and the maintenance of a permanent army and fleet. The money obtained from the sale of crown land, the moveable property and revenue from land held on perpetual and hereditary lease from the crown, cathedral estates and, finally, the new wave of land confiscated from delinquents, did not long suffice to cover the state debt. Recent research has established that in the majority of cases these estates were purchased by representatives of the former owners, the prices being in any case lower than the market value.

No progress had been made in the reform of the law demanded by Cromwell. When it became evident that the 'rump' was preparing an electoral law which would virtually ensure the return of its members to Parliament, this proved to be its death knell. On 20 April, 1653, Cromwell, accompanied by an armed detachment, appeared in Parliament and dissolved it on his own authority. The Council of State was dissolved at the same time, and its functions taken over by a council of officers supplemented by civilians. In his proclamation issued on 22 April, 1653, Cromwell declared: 'And after much debate it was judged necessary and agreed upon, that the supreme authority should be by the Parliament devolved upon known persons, men fearing God, and of approved integrity.'

In July the so-called 'Parliament of the Saints' (also known as the Little Parliament — around 140 members) assembled. Its members had been nominated either by the senior officers or by church communities. However, instead of the strictly limited reforms which were passed by the State (or more accurately, officer) Council, the supporters of the Fifth Monarchy sect, Millenarians who were quite numerous in this assembly, believed that in order to prepare worthily for the 'Kingdom of Christ', England required more thorough-going reforms. This sect believed that England was on the eve of the Second Coming, when Christ would establish in the country the 'reign of a thousand years', in which he would rule together with the 'saints'. This 'monarchy' would be the fifth, following the fall of four previous empires, Rome included. Together with the proposal to abolish the Court of Chancery, the agenda also contained a bill on the abolition of the church tithe (and its replacement with other sources of income for the clergy).

While the 'Parliament of the Saints' occupied itself with the question of replacing church with civil marriage, or planning the abolition of the Chancery Court (the supreme court in civil cases, which had long earned for itself a stable reputation for red tape: it had accumulated over 20 thousand unresolved cases, many of which dated back twenty, and even thirty years), it was still tolerated. However, when it attacked the church tithe, of which about half was the 'property' of the lords of the manor (that is, the secular proprietors), the patience of the officer elite reached breaking-point. On their 'advice', the moderate majority of the Little Parliament went to Cromwell on 12 January, 1654, and surrendered their powers. Those who refused to leave Parliament (around 27 members) were expelled by musketeers.

Four days later the new constitution which established the Protectorate — 'The Instrument of Government' — was ready. The history of the Protectorate will be dealt with at greater length below, as the biography of Cromwell between 1654 and 1658 (the year of his death) constitutes its most important and dramatic element.

For the moment we shall simply remark that the Protectorate, which came into being in part out of the need to make military provision against a possible restoration, and in part in order to suppress popular rebellions, prepared the way for the return of the Stuarts to the English throne by its clearly egoistic class policy (conducted exclusively in the interests of the propertied classes). The restoration took place on 25 May, 1660, shortly after the death of Oliver Cromwell. Superficially it might seem that the revolution of the 1640's left no permanent mark (and there are still some historians who continue to hold this opinion). Not only the monarchy, but also the House of Lords, the entire system of central and provincial administration, and the Anglican (episcopalian) church were restored. In fact, however, more thoughtful researchers have long since become convinced that the revolution of the 1640's heralded the start of a new historical age, that only on the basis of its historical experience and achievements is it possible to interpret the history not only of England, but the whole of European continent during the century which followed. This is equally true whether we examine the economic sphere, or the political sphere, the sphere of ideas or the development of science, literature and art. In

a word, there is not one sphere of life, particularly in the history of the English nation, on which the revolution of the 1640's did not leave a deep and permanent mark. Furthermore, it is only through the prism of the historical achievements of this revolution that one can explain the dramatic developments of European history. Few would deny that the history of European manufacture, the industrial revolution during the period of the European enlightenment, and also the essential content of international relations cannot be explored in depth apart from the history of this revolution. It constitutes one of the turning-points in world history, comparable, at a new level of historical development, with the French revolution at the end of the 18th century.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, 'Articles from the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*', *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, Methuen and Company Limited, London, 1971, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, 'Reviews from the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*', *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup>'Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann in Hanover, November 29, 1869', Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982, p. 217.

## *Chapter Two*

### **OLIVER CROMWELL**

Among the historical figures of the past who have led their people in revolutionary and heroic periods, some found themselves in this role due to the fact that they had long anticipated the course of events and did everything to promote them, while others, on the contrary, were only called upon when the events happened and were born along from one act in the drama to the next as the heralds and the most effective instruments in resolving the tasks at hand.

Oliver Cromwell belonged to the second kind.

Up to the beginning of the civil war it would seem there was absolutely nothing in his biography which indicated his potential talent as an outstanding military leader and consummate politician. Even after the war had begun, nothing foreshadowed the heights to which the wave of revolutionary events would carry him. Later, when his life was already coming to an end and his fame had reached its zenith throughout Europe, he himself interpreted it as the will of God, comparing himself to a man 'led in the dark paths through the providence and dispensations of God'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, who had he been previously? 'I was by birth a gentleman,' he said of himself, 'living neither in any considerable height, nor yet in obscurity.'<sup>2</sup> It would be impossible to describe more accurately the position of this provincial squire with his daily routine of estate affairs, his social and political outlook which went barely beyond the borders of his native county. How, then, did he manage, so unexpectedly and so unpredictably, to write an unfading chapter in the history of his people, to become for an en-

tire decade the one who embodied and determined the fate of England? Such was the question put by his contemporaries, while later generations of historical researchers into the life of 'the great rebel' have been even more amazed. Nonetheless, there is nothing mystical about history. If, at a given moment, the right character is available, capable of expressing and resolving the tasks of the day, then he is 'selected' on the basis of his actions. We must repeat here that we are talking of those historical personages who came to historical prominence by means of *objective* selection, and not of those who imposed themselves by force and guile.

Therefore, if it is true that history itself moulds and advances the type of character it requires, which corresponds to the needs of the day, then it is equally evident that such a character only seems to appear 'suddenly', from nowhere. In reality such a character must possess — albeit unsuspected by anyone until the time comes — the innate psychological and leadership qualities which enable him, in a given set of circumstances, to assume his historical mission.

Let us, then, take a closer look at Oliver Cromwell and see whether, during those years of his life — the greater part, when he was unknown — he revealed anything in his character, his outlook, his mentality and conduct which marked him out within his provincial circle.

The biography of Cromwell is paradoxical not only in terms of his literally meteoric rise to the political heights of the nation — a previously unknown rural squire had become inseparably bound up with the fate of a great social revolution — but also in his transformation from the revolutionary who 'stormed the skies' in the 1640s into the conservative dictator of the 1650s, from the man who had organized the overthrow of the Stuart monarchy, who had been the judge and executioner of the 'crowned tyrant' Charles I, into the Lord Protector of England, ready to put the crown on his own head and found a new dynasty to replace the old.

It is not surprising, therefore, if contemporary historians, on observing such a transformation, have frequently concluded that Cromwell was a 'hypocrite' and a 'deceiver', a 'pupil of Machiavelli' who had planned to complete his career by establishing his own dictatorship. How is one to explain the combination of such apparently in-



compatible characters as Robespierre and Napoleon in Cromwell's role during the English revolution? How did it happen that one who, during the civil war between Parliament and the Crown, defended those in the ranks of the army who supported radical religious and political views and aspirations, then, after the revolution, became their most implacable enemy and merciless persecutor?

We shall try to answer these questions by basing ourselves primarily on what Cromwell himself had to say about all that happened as regards himself and the country during the stormy years of revolutionary change, and then on an objective analysis of the events themselves.

## THE COUNTRY SQUIRE

Oliver Cromwell was born on 25 April, 1599 in the rather dreary county town of Huntingdon (population 1,000-1,200), a typical corner of rural England, where life was enlivened only during the large weekly markets on the town square. The economic affairs of the landowners and land-leasers, the farmers and stock-breeders, the craftsmen and traders, as also their honour and morals, were still completely, be it directly or indirectly, under the supervision of the local gentry and clergy.

Cromwell's family had been among the representatives of the local elite since the reformation and the subsequent dissolution of the monasteries and confiscation of their property by the Crown. Cromwell's great grandfather, Richard Williams, chose to adopt the surname of his uncle, Thomas Cromwell, a powerful favourite of Henry VIII (nicknamed 'the hammer of the monks'), and not without reason. As Thomas Cromwell's agent, he had carried through the dissolution of the monasteries in Huntingdon to his own advantage, taking three abbeys, two priories and the lands of a convent in Hinchinbrook—immovable property to a total annual value (in revenue) of £2,500. It comes as no surprise to learn that he then won the hand and heart of the daughter of the Lord Mayor of London. His son, Sir Henry, known as 'the Golden Knight', built himself a splendid country house on the site of the former convent. His son, Sir Oliver, managed in a very short time to squander the family inheritance (on just one reception

for King James I he spent several hundred pounds), and was obliged to sell Hinchinbrook House. Robert, the father of the Oliver in whom we are interested, was the youngest son of 'the Golden Knight' (Sir Henry), and therefore inherited only a small portion of the family property (in fact the former convent). Robert Cromwell was a justice of the peace and bailiff of the town of Huntingdon, which is evidence of his prominent standing. However, his annual income was around £300, a very modest sum for a gentleman of position in his own native county (although many times more than the income of the average farmer). These circumstances were responsible for moulding two typical characteristics of the young Oliver Cromwell which remained with him all his life: 1) unwavering support for Protestantism and hatred for papists, and 2) a 'poverty' complex (although, as we have seen, this was far removed from the truth in his youth, and already quite ludicrous in his later years) which wounded his pride every time he compared the luxury of his uncle's country house (in Hinchinbrook) with his own home (where, in addition to himself, there were also six sisters). This perhaps explains references to his 'sharpness' and 'hot temper' in clashes with the pillars of local society, and his 'intercession' on behalf of the 'lesser brethren' mistreated by the powers-that-be, not to mention representatives of his own circle.

Of Oliver's childhood we know with certainty only that his parental home was dominated by an atmosphere of fervent Puritanism with its ethical ideals of 'thrift', of 'worldly calling', that is, practicality in business affairs, and the conviction that 'the Lord sees all', and every action is a prayer. The tone was set by Oliver's mother, Elizabeth Steward. Oliver's schoolteacher, Thomas Beard, was also a strict Puritan known for his book 'The Theatre of God's Judgements'. For Beard, the whole of existence embodied the battle between God and the devil, a battle in which the 'saints' (that is, the Puritans) fought on the side of God, and therefore were certain of their victory. It was from Beard that Oliver Cromwell was also to receive his first lessons in political awareness: 'How rare ... good princes have been at all times'; 'the greatest and mightiest princes are not exempt from punishment'.<sup>3</sup> They, like all mortal men, are subject to civil law. Beard saw historical events as the manifestation of the divine plan, bringing reward to

some and retribution to others. Later, following his schoolteacher, Cromwell will describe the outcome of human action as divine providence, and ascribe to this and this alone both the victory of the parliamentary cause in general, and his own military and political victories in particular. There can be no doubt that theology and Beard's concept of history as the operation of divine providence served as the basic intellectual baggage which Cromwell took with him through life, the spiritual armoury which served as his verbal shield and sword in all his clashes in the parliamentary camp with those who blocked the path which heaven had called upon the 'faithful' and the 'elect', and himself above all, to follow.

In 1616 Cromwell became a student at the most Puritan of the Cambridge colleges, Sidney Sussex College, where he studied for only one year. Of the subjects taught there, he was most attracted by mathematics and history. However, according to surviving evidence, he was not a very assiduous student, and showed far greater enthusiasm for horse riding, swimming, playing ball, hunting, archery and fencing. In short, it would seem that Oliver far more frequently earned the envy of his fellows in sport than the praise of his lecturers in learning.

In the summer of 1617, news of the death of his father obliged Oliver to leave university and return home to help his mother run the household—he was now the only man in a family of eight.

From his days at university Cromwell retained a lifelong admiration for secular sciences, and in particular for history. Later, on recommending Raleigh's 'The History of the World' to his son Richard, he told: 'It is a body of history and will add much more to your understanding than fragments of story'.<sup>4</sup> This time he spent two years at home, and surprised his neighbours by proving to be a diligent and capable country squire. In 1619 Oliver set off for London to study law. This was a perfectly normal step, as the business affairs and public duties of a country squire, which might include acting as a justice of the peace or becoming a member of Parliament representing his native county, made it necessary to have some knowledge of civil law. However, where Cromwell studied in London, and his success in this field remain unknown. All that is known is that in August, 1620, the twenty-year old Oliver married the eldest daughter of a rich London fur merchant, and

shortly thereafter returned with her to his native Huntingdon. Thus began the twenty years in Cromwell's life during which the affairs and pastimes of a country squire and father of a large family (over eleven years Elizabeth gave him seven children) entirely absorbed his considerable energy. Judging by the evidence, Cromwell was not only a fond father—his tender affection for his children is well known—but also a loving husband. After thirty years of marriage he wrote to his wife, apparently replying to her complaints of loneliness: 'Thou art dearer to me than any creature...' The only events during these long years of awaiting 'the call of fate', events which shed light on his potential capacity for public service and, most importantly, on his outlook (his attitude to the growing absolutist claims of Charles I and the actions of royal agents in the provinces), are those connected with his role in the conflict between the citizens of Huntingdon and the ruling clique in the Common Council. The 'New Town Charter', which the town had acquired at a generous price from Charles I, abolished the annual election of the council members, thereby increasing the scope for arbitrary action on the part of the ruling clique, and also muffling the voice of protest against these elections by the clique's victims. The new charter replaced the two bailiffs and twenty-four members of the Common Council, freely elected annually, with twelve elected aldermen and a mayor, elected annually by the *aldermen themselves*. This was a typical example of the oligarchic coup within the urban council. In addition, the new charter still further reduced control over the way in which this clique disposed of the town's common land. Oliver Cromwell led the indignant citizens of Huntingdon in publicly denouncing the arbitrary actions of the local oligarchy. For his 'disgraceful and unseemly speeches' he was summoned to London, where he appeared before the Lord Privy Seal. Cromwell's 'acknowledgement' that he had spoken 'in heat and passion' secured his 'pardon'.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, in order to realize which side Cromwell is prepared to take in the growing conflict between the new aristocracy (of which he was a typical representative) and the Stuart regime, what matters is not the outcome of this particular case, nor Cromwell's words in the chamber of the Lord Privy Seal, but his popularity in his native town. Here it is worth noting that he was

elected member of Parliament for Huntingdon in 1628-1629, that same Parliament which adopted the famous 'Petition of Rights' and was shortly thereafter dissolved by Charles I. One of the main demands of this Petition was that no man hereafter 'be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such like charge, without common consent by Act of Parliament'; and that none be called 'to make answer, or take such oath, or to give attendance, or be confined, or otherwise molested or disquieted concerning the same, or for refusal thereof; and that no freeman in any such manner as if beforementioned, be imprisoned or detained'. It is also worth remembering that Cromwell's first recorded speech as a member of the 1628-1629 Parliament was devoted to a defence of the Puritan views of his teacher, Thomas Beard, who was being harassed by Anglican prelates for exposing a papist at court. One more characteristic detail: when, on 2 March, 1629, the King ordered the session of Parliament to be terminated, an incident occurred which was without precedent in the entire history of Parliament: a large number of members of Parliament refused to obey the order, and the speaker, who was leaving, was forcibly returned to his seat and kept there (without the speaker the House could not sit). As if foreseeing the period of rule without Parliament, the House of Commons hastily adopted, in the few remaining minutes before the arrival of a detachment of soldiers to disperse Parliament, a ruling which declared unlawful all unsanctioned forms of raising revenue. Oliver Cromwell was amongst those who refused to obey the King's will. After this first appearance on the stage of national history, he returned home, and nothing more was heard of him for a long time, as if he had disappeared permanently from the scene. The period between 1630 and 1636 was the most difficult of his life. Realizing that his defeat in his clash with the oligarchy of Huntingdon had put an end to his public position in the county, Cromwell took a difficult decision: in May, 1630, he sold all his property in the town and moved with his family to Saint Ives (in the neighbouring county of Cambridgeshire), where, from a property point of view, he was clearly in reduced circumstances: no longer a freeholder, he had to be content with the modest position of leaseholder of another's land, since Char-

les I, in his search for additional sources of revenue, had resorted to massive fines imposed on freeholders who had an income of more than £40 per annum and who did not pay their knight's fees. At the same time he experienced financial difficulties (rumour explains these as due mainly to his extravagance as a youth). Finally, Cromwell found himself yet again in conflict with royal will: this time for refusing to apply (for a fee, of course) for the title of knight; for this he was fined ten pounds. Clearly, the principle involved was more important than the money. Cromwell remembered the lesson of the 1628-1629 Parliament, which was to oppose any attempts by the Crown to raise revenue without parliamentary consent. It was said that at this time Cromwell seriously thought of emigrating to the North American colony of New England, which was a refuge for many Puritans suffering persecution at home. This was a period of deep internal crisis for Cromwell. Doctors who treated him at the time noted that he was extremely melancholy and hypochondriac. Cromwell himself would later define his condition as 'conversion', 'spiritual rebirth', that is, he would turn to the Calvinist conception of attaining, after long and painful doubts going not infrequently as far as despair, the certainty of belonging to the 'elect', the 'saved', the 'saints'. From now on Cromwell, as we have already remarked, will explain all his actions as 'the will of God', and their outcome as 'divine providence'. Later, Cromwell himself wrote of his religious experience: 'Blessed be His name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine! You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived in and loved darkness, and hated the light. I was a chief, the chief of sinners'.<sup>6</sup>

Christopher Hill, a contemporary English historian, perceptively commented that the period of Cromwell's 'spiritual rebirth' coincided in an amazing fashion with one not unimportant but wholly 'earthly' event in his life. In 1636 his uncle Thomas Steward died, leaving him a considerable inheritance. Cromwell moved to Ely, immediately becoming one of the most prominent squires in this extensive district.

If, in terms of property and position, Cromwell now belonged to the upper stratum of the middle provincial gentry, in terms of his world outlook he personified the Calvinist Puritan, and not only because his property inter-

ests were bound up with the irreversibility of the reformation, but also because of his internal religious and external political experience (his clashes with the political laws of absolutism both in London and in his native county). This not only meant that henceforth he believed that in every instance he was 'guided by the Almighty', but also that, for him, 'the cause of God' was wholly identified with opposition to the absolutist claims of the London and provincial authorities.

To declare that, in his definition of the essence of this 'cause', Cromwell proved every time to be merely a representative of that class to which he belonged by birth, by position and by outlook, would be simply to state a truism. Cromwell the country squire would never have become the Cromwell of history if he had not been more flexible than the average Calvinist, if his political thinking had not been far broader than that of a typical provincial gentleman, and if he had not been able, *at given moments*, to forget his social class and—in the name of the final triumph of that class—*move outside it*, rise to the level of leader of all the 'humiliated and oppressed', and thus express national interests. A typical illustration of this as regards his attitude to the government of Charles I is provided by the litigation he undertook (1638) against the drainage of the fens adjacent to his land in Ely. Since time immemorial, the fens had provided the local peasants with fishing, hunting and common pasture for their cattle. The draining of the fens threatened to deprive them of their common rights, which would have delivered a particularly harsh blow at those with little or no land of their own, and for whom these rights were a major source of subsistence. Cromwell led the opposition to fen drainage. Here we learn that 'Mr. Cromwell of Ely had undertaken, they paying him a groat for every cow they had upon the common, to hold the drainers in suit for five years and in the meantime they should enjoy every foot of their common'.<sup>7</sup> When the king intervened in order to personally take charge of fen drainage, Cromwell was the chief defender of those who were threatened by the loss of common rights. The King was informed that Cromwell 'was especially made choice of by those who ever endeavoured the undermining of Regal authority, to be their Orator at Huntingdon, unto the ... King's Com-

mission of Sewers there, in opposition to His Majesty's most commendable design'.<sup>8</sup> This conflict remained unsettled up to the beginning of the revolution. We shall note in this connection just one characteristic of Cromwell—his ability, in order to achieve a purpose dictated not so much out of concern for those actually affected as by a far more long-term aim, to align himself openly with those who were far lower down on the social ladder and who, if the political situation had been other than it was, would scarcely have won his sympathy.

There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that, when Charles I ordered Parliament to be convened in 1640 (the famous 'Short Parliament', so called because it sat for only three weeks), Cromwell was one of the two members representing Cambridge. He was also elected in the autumn of the same year, when elections were held to the new Parliament, destined to become the 'Long Parliament' (it continued right up to 1652).

It was then that began a truly amazing page in the biography of Cromwell—as, moreover, in the history of England as a whole. However, before moving on to this, let us look briefly at the page we are about to leave.

With the heavy, weather-beaten face of a country man, with a sharp, hoarse voice, full of energy and sometimes of explosive temper, Oliver Cromwell belonged to an aristocratic family whose origins, as we have already seen, did not go that far back into the past. As many other families of the provincial gentry, who together composed the so-called 'new aristocracy', the Cromwell family owed their rise to the reformation and dissolution of the monasteries. Belonging to a junior branch of this family, Oliver Cromwell was a man of modest means, but this was compensated for by the wealth and influence of the senior branch. However, after the bankruptcy of the elder Cromwell, who lost his former influence together with Hinchinbrook, his nephew would have faced the total obscurity of a noble but modest rural land-tenant had it not been for an unexpected inheritance combining with his own political and religious convictions, so clearly revealed in local and national social and political conflicts, and in which his position coincided with the growing opposition to the Stuart government.

Cromwell had chosen his side of the barricade long before the revolution began.



## THE FIRST CIVIL WAR: WITH BIBLE AND THE SWORD

When, having refused the title of knight, Oliver Cromwell, gentleman land-tenant, entered the House of Commons in the late autumn of 1640, he was not at all the rough provincial squire or typical back-bencher he is described as being by hostile contemporaries and certain later biographers. This, for example, is how he was seen by Sir Philip Warwick, royalist and member of the court of Charles I. 'I came into the House ... and perceived a gentleman speaking (whom I knew not) very ordinary apparelled, for it was a plain cloth-sute, which seemed to have bin made by an ill country tailor; his linen was plain, and not very clean;... his countenance swoln and reddich, his voice sharp and untunable, and his eloquence full of fervor...' However, those who judged Cromwell not by the cut of his suit and not by the way in which his ribbon was tied to his hat, but by the character and force of his convictions, immediately saw in him dedication and will-power. In reply to the question: 'Who is that slovenly gentleman?' one of the acknowledged leaders of the opposition, John Hampden, replied: 'That slovenly fellow which you see before us;... who hath no ornament in his speech; I say that sloven, if we should ever come to have a breach with the King ... in such case will be one of the greatest men of England.'<sup>10</sup> This prediction by Hampden was in fact based on past experience, on the role Cromwell had played in conflicts with the King in Huntingdonshire and Cambridge and, no less indicative, his refusal to take the title of knight and pay the so-called 'ship money'. However, Cromwell was well known personally among the leaders of the opposition. He was a cousin of Hampden, St John, Waller, Hammond and a number of others. He had eleven cousins and six more distant relatives in the Long Parliament. The leading members of the Long Parliament were bound not only by political convictions but also by blood ties, and Oliver Cromwell belonged to this group.

Although Cromwell probably felt far more at home in the saddle than in the role of parliamentary orator, and wielded the sword far more skilfully than words, nonetheless one can only be amazed at his energy as a parliamentary figure. As testimony of the special trust placed in him,

the leaders of the opposition, and in particular John Pym, appointed him to various parliamentary committees, while the House of Commons approved his speeches delivered on the more controversial issues in the political battle. We shall illustrate with a few examples the character of Cromwell's political activity in Parliament during this 'peaceful' (constitutional) period of the revolution.

On the day when Sir Philip first saw the unknown, 'ordinary apparelled' country gentleman in the House of Commons and heard his unmelodic voice, Cromwell had risen from his seat in order to draw the attention of those present to the fate of John Lilburne, the London trade apprentice—later his implacable opponent—who had been imprisoned on the orders of the Star Chamber (for a period left to the King's pleasure) for spreading seditious Puritan leaflets. For the royalist Warwick, 'the subject matter could not bear much of reason...' for '...he aggravated the imprisonment of this man by the Council Table unto the height, that one would have believed the very Government itselfe had been in great danger by it.'<sup>11</sup> For Cromwell, however, it is clear that the Lilburne case symbolized the extent of the arbitrary and harsh judgement of the London authorities, above all in their treatment of Puritans. If we recall the source of the prosperity and position of the Cromwell family, then we are not surprised to discover that for Oliver Cromwell religious questions were very sensitive, and that his hostility towards the church order introduced by Archbishop Laud was so sharp and implacable. Cromwell actively supported complaints against the well-known anti-Puritan, Bishop Matthew Wren. He also played an active role in drafting and presenting before Parliament the Root and Branch Petition, which demanded the abolition of the episcopate and everything related to it, and that 'government according to God's word be rightly placed amongst us'.<sup>12</sup> He was successful in securing the adoption of a resolution permitting parishioners of any parish to elect their own preacher. Finally, when London received news of the rebellion against English rule in Catholic Ireland, Cromwell called on the House of Lords to agree to the creation of an expeditionary force to be sent against the rebels. As soon as the list was opened for contributions to meet the expenses of the expedition, Cromwell signed for £500, receiving in exchange the promise of an offer of 1,000 acres in the con-

quered country. As he himself subsequently remarked, Cromwell 'loaned' a total of £1,400 to Parliament for the Irish expedition, an indication of his prosperity.

Although the bill itself was introduced by Edward Dering, it was given to him for that purpose by Cromwell and Sir Henry Vane the Younger.

Pursuing exactly the same anti-royalist aims, Cromwell continued as a member of Parliament to defend the interests of those who had become the victims of fen drainage. He defended, for example, the peasants of Somersham, near Saint Ives, who had pulled down the fence erected around 100 acres of former common land which had been sold to the Earl of Manchester.

News of the uprising in Ireland dramatically changed the political situation in London. The danger of an invasion of England by Catholic rebels further aggravated the anti-Catholic mood in the country. At the same time, the organization of fund-raising to equip a military expedition to suppress the rebellion raised the question of who was to be in charge of this expedition. If the King were put in charge, then the troops might be used to pacify not Ireland but the rebellious Parliament in London.

In Parliament, these fears led to the appearance of a historically important document termed the Grand Remonstrance. As we already know, this contained a comprehensive list of royal abuses of power during the years of government without Parliament (1639-1640), and demands that the King get rid of 'malignant' counsellors and replace them with advisors approved by Parliament. It is indicative that article 32 of the Grand Remonstrance, which reads: '...the taking of common and several grounds ... from the subjects ... without their consent and against it', was proposed by Cromwell.

After heated debates which lasted without a break for fifteen hours during the night of 22-23 November, the Grand Remonstrance was passed by a majority of just eleven voices (159 in favour, 148 against). During the voting there was one moment when the members of the House of Commons reached for their swords. It was as they were leaving at dawn that Cromwell made his famous comment to his neighbour to the effect 'that if the Remonstrance had been rejected he would have sold all he had the next morning, and never have seen England more...'<sup>13</sup>

That night the former unanimity of the House of Commons came to an end. The initially moderate reformers gradually became royalist. One example of such a transformation is Edward Hyde, later Earl of Clarendon.

In a situation in which Parliament and the nation were polarizing into two camps, Charles I left a capital which refused to obey him and went to the north of the country, where he hoped to find support among the still influential feudal lords and the Scots. Four fifths of the House of Lords and one half of the House of Commons then also left London. England was on the brink of civil war, frightening some, cooling the ardour of others. 'No reformation is worth the charge of a civil war,' wrote the Earl of Clarendon later, and he was echoed by the poet Andrew Marvell: 'The cause was too good to have been fought for'.<sup>14</sup> Members of Parliament like Richard Baxter or Edmund Ludlow were horrified by the discovery that there were people ready to fight against their king. It was now that Oliver Cromwell proved to be the most energetic and effective among the few more staunch defenders of the gains achieved during the constitutional period, and not only inside Parliament, but also in the counties, where opinion was also polarizing. It was not because he was eager to use his skill with the sword, but because he realized that civil war was inevitable, and did all he could to ensure that Parliament was not caught unprepared.

Cromwell's activities following the King's departure to the north could be more accurately termed military-political. On the eve of open armed conflict, both camps—the Crown and Parliament—gathered their forces and supplies, competed in attracting onto their side the militia of counties and towns, castles, arsenals and the fleet. During these months of spring and summer, 1642, Cromwell revealed enviable energy in his capacity as a member of numerous parliamentary committees, examining various issues and transmitting on behalf of Parliament a large number of messages and appeals, assignments which, in addition to other abilities, also required the gift of convincing others. He was concerned by such questions as the extent to which the loyalty of the Lord Mayor of London to Parliament could be relied on, and whether the Tower garrison was prepared for military action. On Cromwell's recommendation, a committee was set up to review the nation's defence capacity. On 12 July it was resolved to cre-

ate an army '...for the safety of the King's person, the defence of both Houses of Parliament...'.<sup>15</sup> The Earl of Essex was appointed its commander. Also on Cromwell's recommendation, the House of Commons demanded from the corporation of armourers weekly information as to the number of muskets and other arms, and also saddles, they had manufactured, and by whom they had been purchased. As member of Parliament for Cambridge, Cromwell took steps to prevent the King from seizing the silver plate housed in the city colleges. Having armed at his own expense two detachments of volunteers and stationed them in the city, he awaited further developments. When it became clear that these valuables were ready to be dispatched to the King, Cromwell intervened and placed them under his own guard. As a result, the King was deprived of silver to the value of £2,000.

The position occupied by Cromwell in parliamentary affairs long before the beginning of the civil war is indicated by a petition sent to Parliament from Monmouth complaining of Monmouth's dangerous proximity to the Irish rebellion, and the danger presented by Catholics or recusants in such a situation. The memorandum attached to this petition recommended that it 'be sent to Mr. Cromwell'. This recommendation clearly reflects the influence Cromwell had acquired by that time in parliamentary affairs, and also the sharpness of Cromwell's reaction to the Catholic threat.

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Nonetheless, the country squire became the Cromwell known to history not thanks to his parliamentary eloquence, nor his diplomatic skills, but primarily thanks to his military talent displayed on the battlefield. More, Cromwell the general at first seemed to eclipse the political talent only so that he could later reveal a facility in the art of politics which amazed both experienced continental politicians and later historians.

On 22 August, 1642, Charles I raised his standard in Nottingham, thus officially declaring war on Parliament in London. On 29 August, Oliver Cromwell began the formation of a cavalry detachment on the market square in Huntingdon. For all the apparent disparity between these two events—a political act of state and national signific-

ance in the name of the King, and a completely insignificant and private undertaking by a country squire in the small town of Huntingdon, they nonetheless symbolized the nature of the social forces who were soon to clash in open warfare. There is no doubt, however, that the hour had come for Cromwell the general. However, for the majority of those who began this war, particularly the captains and generals on the parliamentary side, not to mention the junior officers, the very idea of 'war' was purely imaginary, known by hearsay and not personal experience. Not only for the ordinary people but also the nobility (with the exception of a few surviving veterans who had fought with the Dutch against Spain, and even fewer veterans of the Thirty Years' War) on the parliamentary side, at least at the beginning of the war, experience on the battlefield was replaced either by genuine enthusiasm born of a sense of the importance—if you will, the 'holiness'—of the goal, or by a show of enthusiasm which disappeared at the first defeat, or, finally, by the coercion used by the authorities to drive onto the battlefield those who did not wish to fight.

As regards his convictions, Cromwell was from the very beginning of the civil war apparently the best prepared among the members of Parliament to wage it as a revolutionary war. As regards the strategy for conducting it, he was, as we shall soon see, closest to the idea of a popular, revolutionary war, uncompromising and based on rapid and total victory over the enemy. It was not without reason that the Earl of Clarendon later ascribed to him the following address to the troops: 'If the King chanced to be in the body of the enemy that he was to charge, he would discharge his pistol upon him as at any other private person, and if their conscience would not permit them to do the like, he advised them not to list themselves under his troop or under his command'.<sup>16</sup>

And if both contemporaries and historians were amazed first and foremost by the fact that Cromwell achieved such surprising military victories, that they were won by a man who, until then, had had no military experience either as a commander or even as a rank-and-file soldier, then clearly they did not take into account the most important factor—Cromwell's military strategy—for here we are talking of success in conducting not an ordinary but *a revolutionary war*, whose conduct is decided primarily in

the sphere of politics. Here Cromwell, as we have already remarked, had passed through the basic school of the first, constitutional phase of the revolution. It is precisely this factor which is neglected by military historians of the English revolution. Although Cromwell's role in the first major battle of the civil war at Edgehill (23 October, 1642), in which the parliamentary general, Essex, let victory slip from his grasp, remains unclear, there is no doubt that it was he who drew from that battle the most far-reaching military and political lessons.

The battle of Edgehill convinced Cromwell that without a strong cavalry the Parliamentarians would never defeat the Royalists. More important, however, were the political lessons he learned from this battle. Parliament required not hired soldiers, who sometimes failed to obey their commanders and became a band of marauders and thieves, but soldiers fighting out of conviction. 'Your troopers,' he said of the parliamentary soldiers to his cousin John Hampden, 'are most of them old decayed servingmen and tapsters..., and ... their troopers are gentlemen's sons, younger sons and persons of quality; do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honor and courage and resolution in them? ... You must get men of a spirit ... that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go, or else I am sure you will be beaten still...'<sup>17</sup> Although Cromwell exaggerated the 'honour' and 'courage' of the gentlemen fighting under the King's standard, his words contained a great deal of truth. In other words, against troops brought up in the concept of feudal honour, Cromwell set troops inspired by their cause, the highest expression of which was, for them, 'the cause of God'. In his search for such 'godly men', Cromwell looked to the counties of the Eastern Association, created, alongside other revolutionary associations, by a resolution of Parliament (at the end of 1642) in order to consolidate the military efforts of the parliamentary supporters.

The counties of eastern England had the largest number of independently-minded 'yeomen-freeholders', long since the bulwark of the reformation and, under the Stuarts, of Puritanism. In addition to the suppression of royalist activities in these counties, Cromwell was looking for 'men of spirit', 'soldiers of God' with which to build up his cavalry detachment, which soon became a regiment. As

for the principles of recruitment, the preacher Richard Baxter wrote: 'He had a special care to get religious men [i.e. Puritans. — *Author*] into his troop. These men were of greater understanding than common soldiers and therefore more apprehensive of the importance and consequence of war and making not money but that which they took for the public felicity to be their end...' <sup>18</sup> Here, however, only one aspect of the concept 'men of spirit' (or 'faith') has been indicated in the context of the outbreak of civil war. During these years the word 'reformation' meant not only the demand that the process of reforming the church be continued, but also expressed the desire for socio-political change. Although Cromwell, like his many relatives in the Long Parliament, would have liked to 'restrict himself' to the recognition of the right of the bourgeois-aristocratic Parliament to control the domestic and foreign policy of the court, he was perhaps the only one who so clearly appreciated that this aim was quite simply unattainable without bringing into action those sections of the population who dreamed of radical change not only in the political but also the social structure of society. It is difficult to say how many of those who initially supported 'reform' withdrew their support from the parliamentary cause when they became aware of this danger and were faced with civil war. John Hotham, for example, who fought initially on the side of Parliament, expressed his fear that if the war continued 'the necessitous people of the whole kingdom will presently rise in mighty numbers and ultimately set up for themselves, to the utter ruin of all the nobility and gentry'. <sup>19</sup> As he revealed at a later stage in the revolution, it was not that Cromwell did not appreciate the threat presented by the lower strata to the inviolability of that distribution of property and freedoms on which the rule of his class was based. However, as a man who dealt with each problem as it arose, his prime concern was the danger of the King winning the military victory, and therefore while this remained the immediate threat, he ignored the more distant menace, and made service in his troops, both in the rank-and-file and in command positions, open to all those who, at that given moment, sought only the military defeat of the Cavaliers.

In June, 1643, the same John Hotham complained that '...Cromwell had employed an "Anabaptist" against him, while another of his creatures, Colonel White, had been



only lately "but a yeoman".<sup>20</sup> If one recalls that the term 'Anabaptist' was used in such circles to refer to those whose aspirations threatened the existing property structure, then the combination of this epithet and the 'base' social status of yeoman reveals the far greater flexibility of Cromwell, who believed that the political situation not only demanded the temporary rejection of aristocratic arrogance, but required that preference be given to the simple man willing to lay down his life, and the radical, fighting out of conviction, rather than to a worthless gentleman concerned about the possibly undesirable consequences of the war.

In 1645 the Earl of Manchester repeated Hotham's accusation in almost the same words. He complained that Cromwell preferred '...not such as weare souldiers or men of estate, but such as were common men, pore and of mean parentage, onely he would given them the title of godly, pretious men...'<sup>21</sup> The Earl of Manchester was expressing the dissatisfaction of the titled aristocracy fighting on the side of Parliament with the 'pernicious' policy of Cromwell, which ignored social position in the name of the victory of Parliament, the policy of preferring conviction to lineage as practised in Cromwell's regiment and, later, in his famous New Model Army. Cromwell explained this policy by the argument that 'the cause of God' could only be achieved by 'godly men'. The nobility, however, for whom social status eclipsed the ultimate goal of the civil war, found a captain who only yesterday had loaded manure onto a cart less acceptable than all the flaws of a gentleman fighting under the royal standard.

The fact that, by ignoring social prejudice, squire Cromwell carried through a truly revolutionary policy within the army, the main instrument of the bourgeois coup, enables us not only to appreciate his social perspicacity but also his personal courage. When the county authorities of Suffolk protested against a certain Ralph Margery remaining the captain of a cavalry detachment he had formed because he was not a nobleman, Cromwell replied: 'I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call a gentleman and is nothing else. I honour a gentleman that is so indeed.'<sup>22</sup> 'If you choose godly honest men to be captains of horse, honest men will follow them...'<sup>23</sup> Thus, in preparing for

revolutionary war, Cromwell created on these principles a military force composed not only of his own cavalry regiment, but also of detachments, mainly cavalry, scattered through the counties and, as a rule, formed on the initiative of commoners. In 1643, replying to a rumour deliberately spread by the Royalists that his troops consisted mainly of 'Anabaptists and atheists', Cromwell considered it necessary to deny the truth of such rumours, declaring that 'they are no Anabaptists, they are honest, sober Christians'.<sup>24</sup> They expected to be treated decently, thus distancing themselves from those whose 'destructive' aspirations were so odious in the eyes of the propertied classes. However, as the hour of decisive battle with the Cavaliers approached, Cromwell took what was, in effect, the final step possible for a gentleman of his day in his declaration of the methods and principles of the conduct of a revolutionary war such as he judged the civil war to be. When, in January, 1644, already a lieutenant-general of the army of the Eastern Association, he learned that Major-General Crawford had dismissed a lieutenant-colonel from the army because he was an Anabaptist, Cromwell wrote: 'Admit he be, shall that render him incapable to serve the public?.. Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve them, takes no notice [whatsoever] of their opinions, if they be willing faithfully to serve them, that satisfies.'<sup>25</sup>

We must admit that Cromwell achieved a breadth of thought simply unthinkable for the average representative of his class in ordinary times and, although—as will become clear later—this proved to be purely tactical and temporary, determined by the needs of the moment and, ultimately, expressing the basic interests of the whole social class, nonetheless it required both remarkable intelligence and indomitable will. It is therefore not surprising that, just over a year after the beginning of open military conflict between the King and Parliament, Cromwell, who until then had had no knowledge of how to conduct regular warfare, had risen from the rank of cavalry captain to lieutenant-general of the army of the Eastern Association, officially under the command of the Earl of Manchester. The rapidity with which he discovered and assimilated the rules of revolutionary warfare amazed the imagination of his contemporaries and also many later historians precisely because they failed to notice the main factor: almost

from the very beginning Cromwell penetrated the essential secret: this war could only become revolutionary if it became a popular war. Considerable evidence has survived which testifies to Cromwell's tireless concern for the maintenance of his troops. One such testimony is a letter sent by Cromwell to Oliver St John in London: 'Of all men I should not trouble you with money matter, did not the heavy necessities my troops are in, press me beyond measure...

'I am now ready for my march towards the enemy; who hath entrenched himself over against Hull... Many of my Lord Manchester's troops are come to me: very bad and mutinous...; they paid to a week almost; mine no ways provided for to support them... My troops increase.

'...[of] the 3,000 l. allotted me, I cannot get the part of Norfolk nor Hertfordshire... I desire not to seek myself; I have little money of my own to help my soldiers. My estate is little... I hope in God I desire to venture my skin. So do mine. Lay weight upon their patience; but break it not.'<sup>26</sup>

We do not know whether Cromwell received the money he requested, but the following week he led cavalry and infantry troops numbering 5,000 to free Fairfax, besieged in Hull. In the ranks of his regiment, military duty came before all. The following incident during the battle of Winceby in October, 1643, offers eloquent proof of Cromwell's personal courage. Cromwell was in command of the cavalry: during the battle his horse was cut down from under him. Cromwell fell, got up quickly to his feet, but was brought down again by a falling horse. When he got up yet again, another horse was brought to him, and he found the strength to remount immediately. The enemy was unable to withstand the attack and fled the battlefield.

The personal courage of Cromwell, his conviction in the rightness of the parliamentary cause, which for him was synonymous with 'the cause of God', his attitude to the troops, whom he saw as 'God's soldiers' and rewarded according to merit—all this won him tremendous popularity in the army. Here is what the Scotsman Baillie had to say about him: 'The man is a very wise and active head, universally beloved, as religious and stout. Being a known Independent the most of soldiers who loved new ways put themselves under his command.'<sup>27</sup> For Cromwell's contemporaries, the concept 'new ways' was invested in every sphere of life with the non-traditional. The combination of

this concept with the fact of being an Independent indicated the rejection of imposed uniformity throughout the country in church matters, and Cromwell later abandoned this principle. However, the policy pursued by Cromwell during the civil war as the leader of the Independent wing in the revolutionary camp seeking rapid and convincing victory over the king met energetic opposition from those 'moderate' circles (mainly the titled aristocracy and wealthy merchants) in this camp who not only were not looking for military victory, but openly feared such an outcome. This trend within the parliamentary army was clearly embodied in the military tactic of the Earl of Essex, who literally avoided victory, in the deliberate passivity of the Earl of Manchester, the commander-in-chief of the Eastern Association, and in Parliament itself, where it was expressed by the Presbyterian party who, from the very beginning of the civil war, preferred negotiation with the King to waging war against him. The degree to which, by the end of 1643, the Presbyterian party desired to reach such an 'agreement' is shown by the fact that when the King decided to create his own 'parliament' in Oxford to counter the rebellious Parliament in London, 175 members of the House of Commons (more than one third of its membership), and more than 80 peers (four fifths of the House of Lords) went over to it. The long-standing conflict between the two who represented these opposing political trends within the army and Parliament — Cromwell and the Earl of Manchester — came into the open after the battle of Marston Moor on 2 July, 1644. Stationed in the left flank of the parliamentary army, Cromwell and his cavalry were to take the main force of the royalist cavalry under the command of Prince Rupert. Cromwell did not wait for the enemy to attack. Singing psalms, his cavalry advanced. The royalist cavalry also moved forward. Two tidal waves, glittering with swords and pikes, approached with accelerating speed.

The attack was furious. To his amazement, Prince Rupert discovered that the 'parliamentary horde' did not scatter before him, did not flee as had happened before, but only retreated slightly. Cromwell, wounded in the neck, rapidly reorganized his ranks and led them into a second attack; the renowned cavalry of Prince Rupert were unable to hold their ground. They turned round and fled. The victory, however, was still only partial, as the ca-

valry on the right flank of the parliamentary army were thrown back, and the infantry in the centre were barely able to withstand the pressure of Newcastle's 'whitecoats'. The situation was saved by Cromwell, who manoeuvred the flank to send a part of the cavalry to pursue Rupert, and with the main body struck at the royalist infantry, now shorn of cavalry protection. This decided the outcome of the battle. The Cavaliers fled, abandoning their banners and weapons. Parliament had won a decisive victory. Of the 18,000 Royalists, 3,000 perished and 1,600 were taken prisoner. Ten banners, sixteen cannon and six thousand muskets were captured.

As was his custom, Cromwell explained the victory as 'divine providence'. 'Give Glory, all the glory, to God. The Lord is our strength, and in Him is all our hope.' He was quite sincere. As regards his own achievements, he merely said: 'I hope to approve myself an honest man and single-hearted.'<sup>28</sup> Yet later it was precisely this which, following the end of the civil war, was questioned not only by his opponents, but also by those who believed it during the war.

This victory in the north, however, was all but annulled by defeat in other battles. Charles I had virtually destroyed the army of Waller in the south, and set off after Essex, who was moving west. Cromwell was eager to relieve Essex, but Manchester flatly refused to move. He had no desire to encounter the King on the battlefield, and even less to defeat him. As a result, at the beginning of September, Essex' infantry laid down their arms, and he himself only just managed to escape. Manchester explained his tactic very simply: 'If we beat the King 99 times, yet he is King still, but if the King beat us once we shall all be hanged.'<sup>29</sup>

It was clear that this was a tactic of 'war without victory' whose purpose was far-reaching and extremely dangerous for the parliamentary cause. The endless protraction of the civil war and its attendant ills (heavy taxation, the billeting of soldiers, requisitioning and plundering) would lead its supporters, the popular masses, to turn against Parliament. Cromwell well appreciated this. To Manchester he replied: 'My Lord, if this be so, why did we take up arms at first?.. If so, let us make peace, be it never so base.'<sup>30</sup> To Parliament he appealed: '...without a more speedy, vigorous and effectual prosecution of the War,... we shall make the kingdom weary of us, and hate the name

of a Parliament.<sup>31</sup> In addition to the clash of two fundamentally different tactics in the war, however, a major role in the conflict between Cromwell and Manchester was played by questions of church organization in England. In June, 1643, a synod had been convened by an ordinance of Parliament and to which Scottish clerics had also been invited. The synod had decided that church government by bishops and archbishops was to be abolished. The majority wished to replace it with Presbyterian organization (on the Scottish model), which in its turn also required strict uniformity. The final decision, however, on the insistence of the Independents, was to lie with Parliament. Cromwell's victory at Marston Moor on the one hand, and Essex' defeat on the other, sharply increased the influence of the Independents both in the army and in Parliament. As a result, '...the Committee of Lords and Commons ... do take into consideration the differences in opinion of the members of the Assembly in point of church-government, and to endeavour a union, if it be possible; and, in case that cannot be done, to endeavour the finding out [of] some way, how far tender consciences, who cannot in all things submit to the common rule which shall be established, may be borne with according to the World...'<sup>32</sup> Let us not be deceived—this conflict between the supporters of strict church uniformity and those who believed that the congregation should have the right to deviate from such uniformity (the first step towards the legalization of freedom of conscience!) again reflected not a religious but a socio-political problem: in the name of unity and religious enthusiasm, should one tolerate in the army the so-called 'sectarians', that is, those who, for the most part, represented the lower orders, whose very possession of arms provoked horror in country lords of the manor and the urban rich. Cromwell, as we recall, was prepared not only to close his eyes to the religious convictions of his soldiers provided they gave themselves unstintingly to the war against the King, but even preferred a 'sectarian' officer dedicated to the cause to a worthless gentleman. It was for this reason, and in order to depict Cromwell as an enemy of the nobility, that Manchester quoted words allegedly spoken by Cromwell, namely that he hopes to 'live to see never a nobleman in England'. To this he added that Cromwell was disposed above all to those who 'did not love lords.'<sup>33</sup>

We should not be surprised that the 'moderates' in the parliamentary camp decided, not without purpose, to see the policy which Cromwell was obliged to adopt by force of military circumstances as a deliberate social policy, and his 'tolerance towards sectarians' as a threat to the existing order. In fact, as has already been noted, Cromwell, on his own admission, not only considered himself a gentleman by birth, but, as would soon become clear, shared the prejudices of his class. However, he was nonetheless distinguished not only by a more flexible mind but also by greater consistency and a deeper understanding of the interests of his own class at the different stages of the revolution. That is why, during the civil war, Cromwell conducted himself like a revolutionary, convinced that in order to preserve the temporal order so cherished by his own class, the King must be *decisively defeated on the battlefield*, for otherwise his absolutist claims could not be overthrown. The sole means of achieving this aim was, in his opinion, an army based not on social but on revolutionary principles, that is, on the enthusiasm and dedication of yeomen and craftsmen wearing soldiers' uniform. A typical illustration of this policy is Cromwell's second intervention in the Lilburne affair. Although the younger son of a gentleman, Lilburne adopted a radical position in matters of church and state organization. Having learned that the Earl of Manchester was threatening to hang Lilburne for having 'willfully' taken a royalist castle in violation of orders, Cromwell spoke out in his defence, just as he also defended the lieutenant-colonel expelled from the army by General Crawford simply because he refused to accept the coercive nature of Presbyterian orthodoxy. It was precisely this policy of releasing the initiative of the 'common people' for which the Presbyterians could not forgive him. In 1641, when the Root and Branch Bill (on the abolition of the episcopate) was being drawn up in Parliament, Sir John Strangways warned that '...if we make a parity in the church we must come to a parity in the Commonwealth...' <sup>34</sup> The tactic pursued by the Earl of Manchester during the war was also deliberately adopted by the Earl of Essex, commander of the parliamentary army in the south. 'Posterity will say that to deliver them from the yoke of the King we have subjugated them to that of the common people.' <sup>35</sup> In order to prevent this, he promised to

devote the rest of his life to suppressing the boldness of the commoners.

Thus, by the end of 1644, General Cromwell, the victor at Marston Moor, had accumulated numerous facts which proved that the Presbyterians who held commanding posts in the army, and in particular the Earl of Manchester, had no desire whatsoever to secure victory in the war as 'it might be disadvantageous to bring the King too low'.<sup>36</sup>

On 9 December, 1644, Cromwell rose from his seat in the House of Commons and spoke for the first time as a statesman. 'It is now a time to speak, or forever hold the tongue. The important occasion now is no less than to save a Nation out of a bleeding, nay almost dying, condition...

'For what do the enemy say? Nay, what do many say that were friends at the beginning of the Parliament? Even this, that the Members of both Houses have got great places and commands, and the sword into their hands; and, what by interest in the Parliament, what by power in the Army, will perpetually continue themselves in grandeur, and not permit the War speedily to end, lest their own power should determine with it. This [that] I speak here to our own faces, is but what others do utter abroad behind our backs... If the Army be not put into another method, and the War more vigorously prosecuted, the People can bear the war no longer, and will enforce you to a dishonourable peace...'<sup>37</sup>

The pathos of this speech lay not only in the fact that it exposed the Presbyterian tactic of preventing victory over the King by endless procrastination and evasion, but also in its diplomatically skilful preparation of the House to adopt such a momentous decision. In order to achieve this, Cromwell ended his first speech that day by expressing his confidence that the members of both Houses were ready to prove in deed that they were motivated not by ambition and greed, but placed the interests of the common weal above personal interests. 'And I hope we have such true English hearts, and zealous affections towards the general weal of our Mother Country, as no Members of either House will scruple to deny themselves, and their own private interests, for the public good...'<sup>38</sup> Cromwell was clearly provoking his Presbyterian opponents, who had long dreamed of expelling him from the army. His calculation proved fully justified. He had barely had time to return to his seat when Zouch Tate, a Presbyterian, imme-



diately took the opportunity to propose that the House of Commons vote on a resolution that 'during the time of the war no member of either House shall have or execute any office or command, military or civil, granted or conferred by both or either of the Houses'.<sup>39</sup> This was precisely what the Independents had been waiting for. Sir Henry Vane, an Independent, was the first to illustrate voluntary acceptance of this proposal by declaring that he was prepared to retire from his post as treasurer of the fleet. He was followed by Cromwell, who declared that he was prepared to retire from his post in the army, adding that the soldiers under his command were fighting not for him but for Parliament. 'They do not idolize me, but look upon the cause they fight for,'<sup>40</sup> and therefore would do their duty under any commander. The result was the Self-Denying Ordinance, according to which all the members of Parliament, including Cromwell, were to leave the army. Cromwell, however, knew what he was doing: he had secured the removal of the Presbyterians from the army, including the Earls of Manchester and Essex.

Cromwell's military achievements, however, had won such recognition, and the military position of Parliament was so complex and precarious, that the latter continued to give him 'temporary' military assignments, that is, in effect made an exception in his case from the general rule.

On 15 February the House of Commons adopted a resolution to replace the former territorial militia recruited on a county basis (and often unwilling to fight outside its own county) with a new, regular army financed by the state. This was the New Model Army, which later incorporated various parliamentary formations. Thomas Fairfax, who had distinguished himself in the war against the Royalists in the north, was appointed its commander-in-chief. The post of deputy commander, that is, lieutenant-general, was deliberately left vacant. The cavalry core of this new army was made of Cromwell's cavalry detachments, which had long won the nickname 'Ironsides' for their courage. The Scottish commander, Leslie, who had fought in the Thirty Years' War, said of them: 'Europe hath no better soldiers'.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this army was its abandonment of the traditional principle of choosing commanders only from among the 'nobility', 'gentlemen'. This explains why there appeared a whole galaxy of talented commanders from among the

common people: Colonel Pride, a former cabman, Colonel Hewston, a former boot-maker, Colonel Fox, a former boiler-maker, and Colonel Rainsborough, previously a ship's skipper.

The New Model Army, composed mainly of yeomen and urban commoners, well disciplined, well-equipped, and eager to bring the war to a victorious conclusion, was the first *regular revolutionary army* in Europe. Before it could be put in the field, however, the vacant post of lieutenant-general had to be filled. Fairfax requested, in his own name and that of the Military Council, that Parliament appoint Cromwell. He wrote: 'The general esteem and affection which he hath both with the officers and soldiers of the whole army, his own personal worth and ability for the employment, his great care, diligence and courage, and faithfulness in the service you have already employed him in, with the constant presence and blessing of God that has accompanied him, make us look upon it as a duty we owe you and the public to make our suit.'<sup>42</sup>

On 10 June, Cromwell was appointed lieutenant-general of the New Model Army, on 13 June he took up his duties, and on 14 June the decisive battle of the civil war was waged at Naseby. The cavalry on the left flank was commanded by Ireton, while on the right flank stood Cromwell's cavalry. The royalist cavalry under the command of Prince Rupert struck the left flank, which was thrown back. In the centre, the royalist infantry was pressing the 'Roundhead' infantry, and thus the outcome of the battle depended entirely on the right flank. Cromwell did not wait for the enemy to attack, but let his troops against the royalist left flank. Later he wrote: 'When I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we a company of poor, ignorant men, to seek how to order our battle ... I could not ... but smile out to God in praises, in assurance of victory, because God would, by things that are not, bring to naught things that are.'<sup>43</sup> After a short engagement the royalist cavalry abandoned the field. Cromwell, however, had learned from Prince Rupert's mistakes, and sent only a part of his cavalry in pursuit of the enemy, while himself remaining with the main body of his troops and attacking the rear and flank of the enemy infantry, which had little choice but to perish or surrender. Many chose the first, but even more were taken prisoner. When Prince Rupert returned to the battlefield,

it was already all over. The difference between the tactic of Cromwell and Prince Rupert was described by the Earl of Clarendon: '...though the King's troops prevailed in the charge, and routed those they charged, they never rallied themselves again in order, nor could be brought to make a second charge again the same day ... whereas Cromwell's troops, if they prevailed, or thought they were beaten and presently routed, rallied again and stood in good order till they received new orders.'<sup>44</sup> Five thousand Royalists laid down their arms; they had lost the whole of their artillery, and the King's writing desk with secret correspondence had been captured. There was a point when Charles I himself wished to lead the attack with a small group of reserves, but someone seized hold of the bridle of his horse and drove him off the battlefield. From that moment on, the remnants of the royal cavalry, totally demoralized and undisciplined, having lost any hope of victory, were capable only of resistance from within fortified castles (mainly in the west) and towns which were taken by the 'Roundheads' one by one after siege, and not infrequently following the bloodless capitulation of the besieged. The surrender of Oxford on 24 June, 1646, concluded the civil war — the first act in a historical drama. In the battle of Naseby and those that followed, Cromwell had displayed his military skill so convincingly that even the House of Lords had to recognize that the army could not do without him. Although the proposal to accord Cromwell the title of baron was turned down, he was rewarded for his services with the confiscated estate of the Marquis of Worcester.

After the capitulation of Oxford, Cromwell moved his family to London. His son Oliver had been killed while serving with the parliamentary army. His daughters Briget and Elizabeth had married: the first a commissar-general in the New Model Army, Henry Ireton, and the second a squire from Northamptonshire, John Claypole.

## CROMWELL AND THE LEVELLERS

The military defeat of the King did not mean the final victory of the revolution. The monarchy was damaged, but not overthrown. Having lost the war against Parliament, the Royalists placed their hopes on a split within the par-

liamentary camp, that is, that the king would prove necessary to one section of his enemies in the conflict with the others. Charles I, who had fled to Scotland in the hope of securing the support of the Scottish nobility, was handed over to Parliament in January, 1647, in exchange for £400,000 to 'cover the expenses' borne by the Scots while fighting on the parliamentary side in the civil war. Judging by the welcome given to Charles I on his way to London, the Royalists had good reason for these hopes: ringing bells, cannon salutes, crowds of Royalists shouting 'God save the King!', and the comfort which Parliament provided for the captive monarch, regardless of expense, in the castle in which he was lodged. It was clear that the King had become a trump card in Parliament's political game.

Thus began a new stage in the history of the revolution, a stage at which the question of the future political organization of the country was to be decided. If one recalls the initially complex web of social and political forces in the parliamentary camp, then it is easy to deduce that there would be acute controversy over any proposed solution to a particular issue.

At the same time, Cromwell had entered a new period in his life: the military commander had to give way to the politician, obliged to manoeuvre among four opposing political forces—a Presbyterian-minded Parliament, an army inclined towards the Independents, the Levellers, who expressed the mood of the popular masses, not represented in Parliament, and, finally, the City, which increasingly revealed its royalist sympathies. Would Cromwell the politician, in these new circumstances, prove able to retain his former revolutionary spirit, broad enough in social and religious matters to override the short-sighted self-interest of the gentry and bourgeoisie (so typical of the policy of Parliament), and include to some extent the interests of those urban and rural popular masses whose heroism and dedication he had so praised during the war?

The opening of this new period in the history of the revolution and in Cromwell's own life was rather sombre.

To begin with, as a result of parliamentary manoeuvres, he was transformed from an influential lieutenant-general into a private individual and back-bencher. Furthermore, he would seem to have suffered a serious illness. From the end of January to the middle of February, 1647, his name

disappears from the papers of the House of Commons. In a letter to Fairfax dated 7 March, he wrote: 'It hath pleased God to raise me out of a dangerous sickness... I received in myself the sentence of death...'<sup>45</sup> However, even though well again, Cromwell did not hasten to Parliament, but thought of returning to the battlefields of the Thirty Years' War to fight on the side of the German Protestants. Meanwhile, availing themselves of his absence and the declining influence of the Independents in Parliament, the Presbyterian majority hurriedly passed a resolution disbanding the army (with the exception of 6,400 cavalry men [out of 40,000] and 10,000 infantry to serve as garrisons). This was done without dealing with the overdue pay of the soldiers and officers — the infantry had 18 weeks pay due to them, and the cavalry — 43 weeks, which amounted to the not insignificant sum of £331,000. Similarly, this resolution did not provide for the payment of pensions to the orphans and widows of those who had been killed while fighting for Parliament. Finally, Parliament said not a word in its resolution about absolving the disbanded soldiers from any criminal liability for actions taken during the war. The resolution, however, did provide for 12 thousand men to be recruited for an expeditionary force to be sent to Ireland. Fairfax, who sympathized with the Presbyterian cause, was appointed the commander. Apart from him, there was to be no other officer with a rank higher than that of colonel, and all the officers were to take the so-called Covenant, that is, to agree to the introduction of the Presbyterian church order. Moreover, members of Parliament could not hold commanding posts in this new army. This last prohibition was clearly aimed at Cromwell. If one considers the dominant mood in the New Model Army, one can understand the desire of the Presbyterian majority in Parliament to free itself from this threatening force, over which they might at any moment lose control. Composed of peasants and commoners, the army was now the vehicle of the aspirations of the masses, who had borne the greatest hardships to secure victory, but were left without any of its rewards. The Presbyterian preacher Richard Baxter described the mood of the soldiers after Naseby as follows: 'I perceived that they took the King for a Tyrant and an Enemy, and really intended absolutely to master him, or to ruine him; and that they thought [that] if they might fight against him, they might

kill or conquer him; and if they might conquer, they were never more to trust him further than he was in their power... They said, What were the Lords of England but William the Conqueror's Colonels? or the Barons but his Majors? or the Knights but his Captains?'<sup>46</sup>

How would Cromwell, that brilliant general who had acted so resolutely, as a genuine revolutionary, during the years of the civil war, conduct himself in these new conditions? Surprisingly, when the conflict between the army and Parliament broke out, he revealed for the first time since the beginning of the revolution features which might have seemed incompatible with his character—confusion, hesitation, indecisiveness. Nor was this because he did not understand on which side justice lay (and, therefore, what should be the choice of an 'honest' and 'godly' man). He himself commented in a conversation with Fairfax: 'There want not in all places men who have so much malice against the army as besots them...'<sup>47</sup> There can also be no doubt that Cromwell perceived Parliament's double purpose in this conflict, namely to disarm the popular masses and also, at one blow, eliminate the main support of the Independents—the army—thereby reducing the Independents to political impotence in Parliament. On first re-appearing in Parliament, Cromwell said not a word in defence of the army, but, on the contrary, 'solemnly protested in the House: "In the presence of the Almighty God, before whom he stood, that he knew the army would disband and lay down their arms at their door, whensoever they should command them"'<sup>48</sup>

The anomaly of this position was so evident that both contemporaries and later biographers have seen it as evidence of Machiavellian hypocrisy, as an illustration of Cromwell's deceitfulness, his advance towards his goal of autocratic rule by a circuitous path. In reality, this merely reveals that, following the defeat of Charles I, Cromwell's revolutionary spirit returned within the confines of his class interests. In other words, the political pragmatism of the landowner, pushed into the background during the war, came to the fore in Cromwell the politician. His political conservatism now grew in direct proportion to the rise of the political independence of the radicals, who spoke out in defence of the needs and aspirations of the popular masses. Let us recall his later frank admission: 'I am by birth a gentleman', and as such, in a

moment of political crisis, he nonetheless preferred the defensive power of the Presbyterian Parliament. In the New Model Army, as he well knew, there were not a few 'wild visionaries' (dreamers) from whom, in peacetime, one could expect many things. Therefore he agreed to go to where the troops were stationed in order to persuade them to submit to the will of Parliament. He kept that promise, went to see the troops, and fervently persuaded the officers to use their influence on the soldiers 'to work in them a good opinion of that authority that is over both us and them. If that authority falls to nothing, nothing can follow but confusion.'<sup>49</sup>

His mission, however, proved unsuccessful. The soldiers remained firm in their decision not to obey the order disbanding the army. On seeing the hesitation of some officers and the treachery of others, they elected two representatives (termed 'agitators') in each regiment to coordinate their defence of their interests.

Thus there appeared in the ranks of the army that long-maturing schism in the previously united party of Independents which separated the 'grandeers' (or 'silken Independents') and the radical commoners, known outside the army as the Levellers. From this moment on, close links were forged between the civilian Levellers and the 'agitators', as a result of which the ideas of the Levellers acquired great influence among the rank-and-file soldiers and junior officers. Faced with the unanimity of the army, Parliament rejected the policy of compromise for head-on collision: it was decided to disband the army by units, beginning, on 1 July, with the regiment commanded by Fairfax. By then, however, the army totally refused to obey Parliament. Those officers who did not enjoy the confidence of the soldiers were expelled, and power passed to the 'agitators'. In order to prevent open rebellion in the army, Fairfax ordered a general review for 3 June. Given this open break between the army and Parliament, the agitators took an important initiative. On 1 June, a detachment under the command of cornet Joyce seized the arsenal at Oxford, and the following day abducted the captive king from Holmby House. Arguments over whether Cromwell knew about Joyce's planned action, or even whether Joyce acted with Cromwell's own encouragement, began shortly after the incident itself. We would agree with Professor Hill, who concludes that very probably

Joyce was prompted into undertaking this action by someone other than Cromwell. It was not without reason that Joyce replied to the parliamentary commissars that he had acted '...with authority from the soldiers'. It is very likely that this incident was seen by Cromwell as a signal to intervene in army affairs. However, there is also the opinion that Cromwell both knew about and approved of Joyce's action. On learning of this, Fairfax was literally dumbfounded, but took no disciplinary measures against Joyce. This move prevented the Presbyterians from making peace with the King behind the army's back. At this point Cromwell finally made his choice: on 4 June he left London and joined the troops. This move was well timed, as the Presbyterians were planning to arrest him the following day, as soon as he entered the House of Commons.

It is easy enough to explain why Cromwell felt obliged to take such a difficult decision. First of all, there was the real danger that the 'silken Independents' would lose control over the army, and with that the possibility that they would find themselves completely excluded from decisions concerning the political future of the country. For Cromwell it would seem that this was not the main, or at least not the only consideration, for otherwise he would not have agreed to the disbanding of the army in the spring of that same year. This leaves the second consideration — *the danger that under the influence of the Levellers the army would be turned into the armed force of the popular masses*. Thus the opening of a new period in the history of the revolution revealed Cromwell the politician in a wholly new light. In contrast to the mid-18th century liberal defenders of this hero of the English revolution, who emphasized mainly his talent as a military leader and the abstract ingenuity of his policy, it would seem to us that the true 'secret' of Cromwell's genius lay in his amazing ability to adapt *the fundamental and unchanging aim of the allied classes in the revolution to the changing circumstances*. From this point of view, Cromwell was a genial political tactician sensitive to any changes in the political situation. Objectively, he faithfully served the interests of these classes during the civil war, when he not only did not prevent but, on the contrary, did all he could to encourage the revolutionary enthusiasm of the labouring masses dressed in soldiers' uniforms, for he realized that this was the guarantee of final victory over the Royalists. After this goal had been achieved, and the



revolutionary enthusiasm of the common soldiers was not only no longer in the interests of the 'grandeess', but already presented a greater danger than the royalist-minded Presbyterian Parliament, Cromwell again took the initiative in resolving difficult issues. This underlying cause of the 'different faces' of Cromwell was, in effect, understood neither by the Royalists nor the radicals. With one voice, although from different positions, they pointed to his 'hypocrisy', his 'duplicity', his 'treachery' and 'cunning'—terms which merely revealed their failure to understand the crucial fact that Cromwell always identified his own—and undoubtedly ambitious—plans with those conditions which offered that solution to a political crisis which would be most favourable to the propertied classes. Thus, for example, in his 'History of the Rebellion', the Earl of Clarendon wrote: 'Cromwell hitherto carried himself with that rare dissimulation (in which sure he was a very great master), that he seemed exceedingly incensed against this insolence of the soldiers, was still in the House of Commons when any such addresses were made, and inveighed bitterly against the presumption ... and he was so easily believed that he himself was sent once or twice to compose the army; where after he had stayed two or three days, he would return again to the House and complain heavily of the great license that was got into the army... And in these and the like discourses, when he spake of the nation's being to be involved in new troubles, he would weep bitterly, and appear the most afflicted man in the world.'<sup>50</sup>

The above explains why, at the critical moment when the soldier-agitators had obtained more power in the army than the grandee-officers, Cromwell decided to use his own popularity among the troops to reduce that power to nought. At the military review it was decided, together with the adoption of the 'Solemn Engagement of the Army', not to disband and not to permit division into units until its demands were satisfied, to create a General Council of the Army which would include, in addition to the senior officers, two officers and two representatives of the rank-and-file 'agitators' from each regiment. Cromwell's intent was obvious—to bring the agitators under the control of the senior officers, turn the General Council into a kind of debating society, while the Military Council, composed only of senior officers and in which Cromwell and his son-in-law, Ireton, played the decisive role, retained

actual power in the army. The subsequent political moves made by Cromwell and his adherents clearly revealed how similar in social essence were their plans for the political administration of the country and those of the Presbyterian majority in Parliament, and, consequently, how far removed were the fundamental aspirations of the grandees from the aims and hopes of the common soldiers, who saw themselves as the defenders of the just cause of 'the people of England'.

In the first place, the grandees, like the Presbyterians, were simply incapable of imagining the political administration of the country without the monarchy. That which divided them—the conditions on which the king would agree to legitimize the political order cherished by allied classes—was no longer so important as to consider them as standing on opposite sides of the barricade. On the other hand, that which separated the aspirations and actions of the grandees from those of the Levellers was fundamental and irreconcilable. Here is how, in July, 1647, Cromwell's adherents described Cromwell's arguments on this question: '...not only a most wicked, but a very difficult, if not an impossible, design, for a few men, not of the greatest quality, to introduce a popular Government against the King and his party, against the Presbyterians, against the nobility and gentry, against the laws established, both ecclesiastical and civil, and against the whole genius of the nation, that had been accustomed, for so many ages, to a monarchical government'.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, Parliament (and its successful general, Cromwell) had fought against the absolutist claims of the monarchy, but not against monarchy as such. Now Cromwell was convinced that the re-establishment of the monarchy was the necessary condition of preserving order and the inviolability of property. 'No men could enjoy their lives and estates quietly without the King had his rights'<sup>52</sup>—such was the foundation of his political philosophy, and it is here that one must seek the explanation of the behaviour of the grandees in the summer and autumn of 1647, and not in the noisy political chronicle of those days.

Typically, however, it is precisely this political surface of events which is placed in the foreground by many of Cromwell's biographers, who are of the opinion that the decisive conflict of the revolution after the end of the civil war was the conflict between the Presbyterians and the In-

dependents. They overlook the fact that, in the summer and autumn of 1647, the army was not only an instrument by which the grandees applied pressure on Parliament, but also an instrument by which the Levellers applied pressure on the 'silken Independents', that it was 'a nest of rebels' (very close to the Levellers) with whom Parliament, moreover, had its own 'account' to settle. Here, for example, is the explanation offered for Cromwell's decision to leave London and join the troops: '...the third letter came to you [Cromwell] from them [the army agitators], wherein they peremptorily told you that if you would not forthwith, nay presently, come and head them, they would go their own way without you'.<sup>53</sup>

Cromwell's political skill was demonstrated as unequivocally during this period as his military skill only a short time before. In the army, Cromwell felt the pressure of the radical wing, which demanded that they march on London to restore justice and violated rights. However, while doing everything to restrain the army from such a step, he simultaneously demanded from Parliament a 'more conciliatory' line of conduct. When, on 26 July, the City attempted to carry through a counter-revolutionary coup (forcibly holding the speaker in his seat, the conspirators obliged the House of Commons to adopt a resolution calling on the King to return to London), Cromwell resolutely moved the army towards the capital. On 6 August he entered London at the head of the cavalry without meeting any opposition.

Then, however, he took a curious step. He hastily moved the army, with the exception of a few units, outside the city boundaries. The Presbyterians grew bold enough to bring back to Parliament the eleven Presbyterian members who had proposed the resolutions on disbanding the army and who had been excluded on the demand of the troops. It took a whole month and the threat that a cavalry regiment would be stationed close to Parliament to secure the annulment of these resolutions. What had happened? Whence this boldness on the part of the Presbyterians, who only recently had been struck with fear on hearing that the army was approaching the capital? The explanation is simple—the Presbyterians had received tangible proof of two important things: firstly, that Cromwell was no less afraid of 'anarchy' in the army than they themselves were, and secondly, that he, like them, could not envisage

any other post-war system for the nation than monarchy and, consequently, the return of Charles I to the throne to which he had been born.

What had actually happened was that, at the beginning of June, Cromwell and Ireton had begun negotiations with the King, then held by the army, and conducted them so actively that St John, a cousin of Cromwell, advised, not without a touch of malice, 'not to do the King's business too fast...';<sup>54</sup> that is, not to be too eager to restore the monarchy. The rivalry between the 'silken Independents' and the Presbyterians in 'courting' the King had but one result – Charles I became less amenable with each day that passed. Finally he declared to his conqueror, Cromwell: 'You cannot do without me. You will fall to ruin if I do not sustain you',<sup>55</sup> and wrote to one of his supporters that he hoped to draw onto his side either the Presbyterians or the Independents so as to eliminate the one with the help of the other. Then he would again be indeed the King. Such was the result of Cromwell's effort to 'arrange' the future of the country behind the back of the army he led, but which he no longer trusted because it had changed from being a purely military power into a political force and, moreover, a radical force threatening to free itself from the control of the grandees and become a revolutionary weapon of the common people. Hence the profound ambiguity that marked Cromwell's behaviour during this period. He was determined not to let the army slip from his grasp, for the army constituted his political power and support, yet at the same time he sought to neutralize this force as one capable of acting independently of him. It is clear that, given the republicanism of the army and the monarchism of his own ideals, Cromwell had no other choice but to manoeuvre. While not wholly destroying the hopes of the army, which were still placed in him, he simultaneously demonstrated his 'obedience' to Parliament and support for the monarchy as a political principle, and this despite the fact that in its Declarations the army demanded both the 'self-dissolution' of a Parliament which still formally existed (since 1640) but which had in fact degenerated, new elections, and the trial of the King. Suffice it to say that, by the end of August, sessions of the House of Lords were attended by no more than seven mayors, while sessions of the House of Commons were attended by no more than 150 members. Nonetheless, even a spectral

Parliament was important for the grandees as a 'lawful' barrier keeping the 'populace' at a respectful distance from the institutions of power. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to learn that Major White was dismissed from the army simply for daring to say that there was 'now no visible authority in the kingdom but the power and force of the sword'.<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, in order to retain his power in the army, Cromwell was obliged to give at least the appearance (more he was no longer capable of) of being willing to listen to and discuss the opinions of the radical wing in the army on the issue of the post-war organization of the country. As an illustration of this, to express it mildly, 'flexibility' on the part of Cromwell, one can cite the following incident: on 18 October, agitators in five regiments handed to Fairfax a document entitled 'The Case of the Armie Truly Stated', in which were set out the main articles of a democratic constitution. No reference whatsoever was made to royal power. Two days later (20 October), Cromwell delivered a speech in Parliament in which he eloquently defended the monarchical order and demanded the rapid return of the King to the throne. In the transcript of this speech we read: 'Through his whole speech he spoke very favorably of the King, concluding that it was necessary to re-establish him as quickly as possible.'<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile murmuring and discontent in the army over negotiations between Cromwell and the King, and his position in Parliament were threatening to spill over into open rebellion. In order to retain control over the situation, Cromwell decided to convene a meeting of the Army Council, attended not only by army agitators, but also representatives of the civilian Levellers. On 28 October, in Putney, Cromwell opened the meeting of the Council with the following words: 'That the Meeting was for public business. Those that had anything to say concerning the public business might have liberty to speak.'<sup>58</sup> The surviving record of the speeches made at the sessions of the Council constitutes a document of exceptional historical importance and interest, and we shall return to it again in another connection. For the moment, we shall merely point to the methodical manner in which Cromwell pursued the grandee policy, his truly parliamentary ability to drown in words an issue which did not suit him. The tone and the subject of debate were set by a speech de-

livered by the 'agitator' Sexby, who launched against the grandees a number of perfectly just and bitter reproaches: they were seeking to satisfy everyone, and therefore satisfied no one; they were doing all in their power to conciliate the King, but he would only be conciliated if they agreed to cut their own throats; at the same time they were also supporting Parliament, as a result of which the reputation of Cromwell and Ireton in the army had fallen drastically. In reply, Cromwell delivered a totally confused and essentially demagogic speech: he and Ireton, it turned out, had not been acting on their own initiative, but in agreement with the Army Council. If their position as regards the King and Parliament was mistaken, then 'I may say it and I dare say, it hath been the fault of the General Council...' <sup>59</sup> (a statement which in reality was true only of the grandees within the Council, but not of the agitators representing the soldiers).

In reply to the demands of the Levellers that the existing Parliament be dissolved; that future parliaments be restricted to a two-year term of office; that electoral districts be reconstituted; that negotiations with the King be ended and that religious tolerance be guaranteed, Cromwell asked: '...what do you think the consequence of that would be? Would it not be confusion?.. Would it not make England like the Switzerland country, one canton of the Swiss against another, and one country against another?.. And if so, what would that produce but an absolute desolation — an absolute desolation to the nation...' <sup>60</sup> Going on to point to the difficulties involved in introducing such a reorganization of national government, Cromwell contrasted the demands of the Levellers against the 'duties' of the army, that is, against the declared aims for which Parliament had waged war with the Royalists. More, Cromwell saw in the Levellers' programme a violation of the 'engagements' which the army had taken upon itself. It is not difficult to appreciate, therefore, that the conference at Putney was the scene of a clash between the aspirations of the radically-minded units of the army, convinced that they were not paid soldiers but in the service of the people and defenders of their rights, and the grandee conviction that the army was in the service of Parliament and was nothing more than the weapon of the classes represented there. The demand of the 'agitators' that the army act in the interests of 'the common weal' was countered by Cromwell

on the principle that the soldiers were to undertake no independent action, the principle of discipline, interpreted as the unquestioning obedience of the citizen.

However, the mood of the agitators at the Council, and even more so outside it, proved so little amenable to his 'godly' speeches and so unpredictable that Cromwell decided to act. When, at the Council sessions on 4 and 5 November, the majority supported the proposition to introduce the principle of universal male suffrage (excluding only those on poor relief, beggars and servants), and to hold a general army review, Cromwell secured their agreement to his request that the 'agitators' should immediately return to their regiments, and that the army review should be held not in the course of one day, but over three days and by units. It was clear that the grandees were afraid of a general army review; it would be easier to deal with separate units. Meanwhile the Officers' Council continued to sit. Even here, however, Colonel Harrison delivered on 11 November a speech unequivocally condemning the King, calling him 'a man of blood', and demanding that he be brought to trial. All of this was evidence of the prevailing mood among the troops.

That same day they learned that the King had escaped from Hampton Court, where he had been held prisoner in relatively comfortable circumstances. Later it became known that he had found refuge on the Isle of Wight. In his 'History of the Rebellion', the Earl of Clarendon expressed his suspicion that the King's escape had been organized by Cromwell who, having become convinced that no agreement could be reached with Charles I, wished to create a situation which would make it impossible for Parliament (that is, for his Presbyterian counsellors) to continue negotiations with him. Clarendon noted that when Cromwell informed Parliament of the King's escape, he did it with 'so unusual a gaiety that all men concluded that the King was where he wished he should be'.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the garrison on the Isle of Wight was under the command of Robert Hammond, a cousin of Cromwell. In addition, it was well known that Cromwell had visited the Isle of Wight on 4 and 12 September, and that he had written to his cousin, Edward Whalley, the commander of the guard at Hampton Court, informing him that there was a conspiracy to murder the King, and Whalley had immediately shown the letter to the King in order to 'suggest' the idea

of escape. Although the closest advisors of the King at the time, Berkeley and Ashburnham, later testified that the details of the escape were worked out during conversations between themselves and the King, nonetheless it is obvious that the escape could not have taken place without the 'co-operation' of the guard.

The King's escape proved more than timely for Cromwell's political game. First and foremost he made use of it as the most powerful argument in favour of maintaining discipline and unity in the army. On 15 November, the review of army units was held at Ware, thirty miles from the capital. However, in addition to the expected four cavalry regiments and three infantry regiments, two more regiments also decided to appear, those under the command of Harrison and Lilburne, whose troops adorned their headgear with the Levellers' draft constitution, the so-called Agreement of the People. When Cromwell demanded that they take these broadsheets off, the soldiers refused. This was the beginning of a revolt that might prove very dangerous for the grandees, and in particular for Cromwell. Their position could have become critical if Cromwell had not acted rapidly and the soldiers had not proved divided amongst themselves. Plunging into the ranks of the rebels with an unsheathed sword he himself removed the broadsheets from the soldiers' hats. Then he seized the 'leaders' and immediately tried them before a military tribunal, condemning three of them to death. To intimidate the soldiers, one of them, Richard Arnold, was shot in front of the assembled troops, and another eleven were arrested. As a result, obedience was restored in the ranks of the regiments which had come to the review, and this was followed by the reading of a manifesto ('Remonstrance'), drawn up in the name of the commander, General Fairfax, which contained — as a purely verbal concession to the radicals — a demand that the Long Parliament be dissolved and new elections held. There were also very vague expressions of the desire to establish 'Equality of Elections ... to render the House of Commons (as near as may be) an equal Representative of the People that are to elect'.<sup>62</sup> This was followed by the 'Engagement' on the part of soldiers and officers 'that every Member of it shall be observant of, and subject to, his Excellency, his Council of War, and every One of his Superior Officers, according to the Discipline of War...'<sup>63</sup> With that the review came to



an end. The review of the remaining units took place without any incident. Thus the 'God-fearing' Cromwell had not stopped at shedding the blood of 'a soldier of God', when the latter made a demand of basic human justice which sounded like a manifest threat to the order on which was founded the prosperity of the propertied classes.

It might seem that, after re-establishing his position in the army, Cromwell would have enjoyed greater freedom in selecting his route to that 'peace' so desired by the broad mass of the population, for whom the burden of taxation, billeting and requisitioning, combined with poor harvests and rising prices, was becoming intolerable. Yet however much Cromwell may have wished not to be seen by the army as a Royalist, he still could think of no other path to peace except through an agreement between Parliament and the King achieved by the efforts of the army. It is indicative that, when opposing at the conference at Putney the Levellers' proposition to overthrow Charles I and place him on trial, Cromwell sought to create the impression that he was by no means a monarchist by conviction, that he did not glorify any particular form of government, that the forms of constitution were merely a moral question, 'but dross and dung in comparison with Christ'.<sup>64</sup> If he had any objection to the Levellers' demands, it was only because they were not practical. In themselves they were very attractive, but only 'if we would leap out of one condition into another'.<sup>65</sup> The surest choice, he argued in his typical manner, was to rely on that which 'God will manifest to us to be the thing that He would have us prosecute...'.<sup>66</sup> The usually well-informed Venetian ambassador declared at the time: 'Cromwell ... is believed to favor the King, prudently realizing that neither he nor Fairfax could subsist for long against the secret detestation of Parliament'.<sup>67</sup> At the end of November, however, Cromwell and his circle changed their attitude to the King dramatically, ending, at least publicly, all relations with him. What had happened? What was the reason for such a change? In seeking an answer to this question, contemporaries recalled the story about the so-called 'Saddle Letter' allegedly sent by Charles I to his wife, and which was hidden in a saddle and seized en route by Cromwell's men. In this letter the King wrote that, in choosing between the army, Parliament and the Scots, he was closest of all to concluding an alliance with the latter. From this Cromwell de-

duced that Charles I could no longer be trusted. However, insofar as this letter has never been discovered, but exists only in hearsay, there are good grounds for seeking the answer in a far more concrete factor, namely the situation in the army at the time. It was clear to the grandees that unrest in the army was so great that the events of the first day of the review had not dealt with it.

In the representations made to Cromwell and his son-in-law, Ireton, on behalf of 'two third parts of the Army', it was stated that 'though they were certainly to perish in the attempt, they would leave nothing unessayed, to bring the Army to their sense; and if all failed, they would make a division in the Army, and join with any that would assist in the destruction of their opposers'.<sup>68</sup> Cromwell, not for the first time that year, decided 'that, if we cannot bring the Army to our sense, we must go to theirs'.<sup>69</sup>

In the middle of December the King concluded a secret alliance with the Scots, who promised to send an army to England to support him. In these circumstances the Levellers' demand at the Putney conference that the King be put on trial for bloodshed and treachery no longer sounded so 'dangerous' and 'destructive' to the grandees. On the contrary, this demand became for the grandees the only way out of the new situation. At a meeting of the Army Council at Windsor on 21 December, the grandees made a great show of their 'spirit of agreement' with the Levellers. It was, of course, impossible to bring the executed soldier Arnold back to life, but the other eleven were released. Colonel Rainsborough, the main opponent of the grandees at Putney, was unexpectedly appointed to the high post of vice-admiral of the fleet. This time the grandees referred to the King in words even sharper than those the agitators had ventured to use in 1647. They expressed their determination to bring him to trial 'as a criminal person'. Thus Cromwell has again appeared before us as a pragmatic politician, a genial tactician, in each instance resolving only the immediate task with the help of 'friends' selected according to the identity of the enemies threatening his cause. Now the support of the Levellers was, for the grandees, of vital importance, and Cromwell seized it unhesitatingly. Having restored unanimity in the army, he addressed Parliament in support of the resolution to cease communications with the King ('No Addresses'). Having until only recently seen in an agreement

with the King the guarantee of the inviolability of the 'ancient constitution', he now hurled thunder-bolts at him without restraint, declaring that the King 'was so great a dissembler and so false a man, that he was not to be trusted'.<sup>70</sup> However, on this occasion also, Cromwell considered it necessary to express publicly his loyalty to monarchical government. 'Truly,' he said, 'we declared our intentions for Monarchy, and they still are so, unless necessity force an alteration.'<sup>71</sup>

However, just as the House of Commons did not hasten to adopt the resolution on ceasing communication with the King, it also, on that very same day, turned down the Agreement of the People put before it by the Levellers, calling it 'seditious'. On 3 January, the House of Commons, after rather heated debates, finally voted (114 in favour, 92 against) in support of the proposed 'No Addresses'. According to those who attended the sitting, the most weighty argument in Cromwell's concluding speech prior to the vote was the movement of his hand towards the sword at his side. That day the Committee of Both Kingdoms was transformed into the Committee of Safety. As two Presbyterian members of this Committee—Essex and Stapleton—had died, and the Scots were excluded for obvious reasons, the Committee of Safety became the supreme executive organ of the country, the leading posts within which were occupied by Independents led by Cromwell. On 8 January, the General Council of the Army 'laid down' its powers and 'dissolved itself' in favour of this committee.

## THE SECOND CIVIL WAR

When the second civil war broke out, the Officers' Council took the solemn obligation to bring the King to trial for the blood he had shed. This clearly indicated confidence in military victory, and the political resolution to act in the spirit of the Levellers' demands.

The second civil war differed from the first in that, in addition to royalist revolts in England, the Scottish army also intervened in order to restore Charles I to the throne. Cromwell easily and rapidly suppressed the royalist uprisings in the south-west of England, but the military con-

frontation with the Scots did not seem to promise easy victories. At the beginning of July, the Scottish army under the command of the Duke of Hamilton crossed the border. It was, however, only half the size of the Scottish army which had fought on the parliamentary side in the first civil war. Nor did it have such experienced commanders as Leven and Leslie. It had been hastily recruited, poorly trained and was even more poorly armed. Finally, the absence of the King (still imprisoned in Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight) and the failure of the Presbyterians to provide the expected mass support during its advance (they were, amongst other things, suspicious of Scottish intentions in the event of victory) scarcely served to inspire the army to self-sacrifice.

Cromwell moved his troops from the south-west to the north of the country in what was, for those days, a very short time—they covered 260 miles in 27 days. On 12 August, they joined the parliamentary troops in the north who had already encountered the Scots on the battlefield. Altogether Cromwell had under his command a total of 8,500 men, only slightly more than one third of the force under Hamilton. Nonetheless, Cromwell decided to engage them immediately, fearing that their further penetration into England might revive the still smouldering royalist revolts or encourage new ones. The battle took place on 17 August, near Preston. By this time the Scottish troops were so stretched that they were separated into three parts. Their reconnaissance was so badly organized that Hamilton did not even suspect Cromwell's approach. When, using the thick dawn mist from the marsh as cover, Cromwell attacked Hamilton's infantry, Hamilton, leaving his rearguard to protect the throne, hurried with his main force to join his cavalry. Cromwell's 'Ironsides' began to pursue the badly disciplined Scottish infantry bogged down in the marshy ground. A strange situation began to emerge: instead of blocking Hamilton's route to London, the parliamentary troops found themselves to the north of the Scots, thus leaving the road south open before them. However, having apparently ignored the demands of elementary logic, Cromwell had brilliantly calculated the balance of forces: instead of waiting until the Scots had gathered their forces, he availed himself of the opportunity to attack while they were divided. Moreover, something totally unexpected now happened on the Scottish

side: hurrying to join his cavalry, which was some distance ahead of the main infantry force, Hamilton missed them. When he finally arrived with his exhausted infantry at the cavalry camp, the cavalry was no longer there. The cavalry commander, Middleton, having learned of Cromwell's arrival, had hurried back to support Hamilton, missed him, and come up against Cromwell's cavalry. For three days Cromwell attacked and crushed the exhausted Scottish troops with almost no losses on his own side. The Scottish defeat was catastrophic: 10 thousand men laid down their arms. The 5,000-strong Scottish unit in the north, and the English Royalists who had rallied to it, fled towards the border. By the end of August the second civil war was all but over. It might seem that this ignominious end to the war for the Royalists would have taught a lesson to the Presbyterian party in Parliament, and all those who, openly or secretly, sympathized with the royalist rebels. This, however, was not the case.

The members of the House of Lords even refused to declare the Scots enemies, while the Presbyterians in the House of Commons conducted themselves so defiantly one might have thought it was not Cromwell and the Independents but they who had won the victory: they summoned to the House ten of their leaders previously expelled on the demand of the army. On 24 August the House revoked the 'No Addresses' resolution and dispatched to the Isle of Wight a deputation of 15 men to renew negotiations with the King.

The Presbyterians were clearly hastening to act while Cromwell and the army were far away from the capital. On 5 December, after protracted dealings with the King, the House of Commons resolved that the King's proposals (that Parliament be given control for twenty years over the militia, and that Presbyterian church organization be established for three years) could serve as a basis for agreement. The country now faced the threat of the 'peaceful' victory of counter-revolution. At this moment of crisis for the grandees, Cromwell moved decisively (albeit again purely tactically) closer to the Levellers. The anti-monarchism of the Levellers, which had so frightened and embittered him only recently at Putney, now became a tactical necessity. The difference was simply that, for the Levellers, this was a fundamental constitutional principle, whereas for Cromwell it was merely a tactical move to

counter the Presbyterian majority in Parliament. Who can tell how events might have developed while Cromwell was engaged in the north had not the King's guard been composed of men loyal to Cromwell. Let us recall that the commandant of Carisbrooke Castle where the captive King was being held was Robert Hammond, a cousin of Cromwell. In order to 'fortify the spirit' of his cousin, who occupied a key position during those days, Cromwell wrote to him on 25 November: 'You say: God hath appointed authorities among the nations to which active or passive obedience is to be yielded. This resides in England in the Parliament... Authorities and powers are the ordinance of God. This or that species is of human institution, and limited, some with larger, others with stricter bands... I do not therefore think the authorities may do anything, and yet such obedience [be] due, but all agree there are cases in which it is lawful to resist ... the query is, Whether ours be such a case?.. First, whether *Salus Populi* be a sound position? Secondly, whether in the way in hand ... this be provided for or the whole fruit of the war like to be frustrated, and all most like to turn to what it was, and worse?.. Thirdly, whether this Army be not a lawful power, called by God to oppose and fight against the King upon some stated grounds?'

Clearly the whole content of this letter implied that Hammond was to guard the King more carefully, and not obey orders issued by the royalist-minded Parliament. Concluding these declarations, apparently so untypical of the thinking of Cromwell the politician, came another not insignificant comment: 'Dost thou not think this fear of the Levellers (of whom there is no fear) that they would destroy nobility, had caused some to take up corruption; to find it lawful to make this ruining hypocritical agreement? I will not say their fear will come upon them; but if it do, they will themselves bring it upon themselves.'<sup>72</sup>

It is worth noting that, in dispelling Hammond's fear of the Levellers (the danger they presented could be used to frighten him by the Presbyterians, inclining to a betrayal of the army), Cromwell repeated, albeit in muted form, certain of the Levellers' assertions. The interests of 'the people of God' have been forgotten by some, despite being in this case 'just and honourable'. The 'people of God' are entitled, by one means or another, to receive the benefits promised to them, or more, and this, naturally,

cannot be expected from the King, against whom the Lord had testified so convincingly. Even allowing for the fact that the term 'the people' in Cromwell's interpretation differed considerably from its meaning as used by the Levellers, the very fact that Cromwell adopted certain elements of Leveller rhetoric is significant. Such was the extent of the tactical flexibility of this gentleman, who so genially identified in every situation the one decisive factor which would give him the victory in the revolution.

Yet again the army opposed the counter-revolutionary conspiracy in Parliament. On 16 November, the Officers' Council, after heated debates, confirmed the Remonstrance, which contained the demand that the delinquents (that is, those who had fought on the side of the King) be brought to trial, and the declaration that, insofar as Charles I was guilty of the bloodshed of the first and second civil wars, he no longer deserved confidence. In its first draft by Ireton, this declaration was more specific, demanding the trial of the King and the dissolution of Parliament. On 15 November, while a compromise version of the Remonstrance was being drawn up, the Officers' Council (as if competing with the Presbyterian Parliament) proposed this final, conciliatory offer to the King. On 16 November his refusal was received. On 18 November the final version of the document was approved by a majority vote. On 21 November, Hammond was removed from his position as commandant of Carisbrooke Castle and replaced by Colonel Ewer (formerly a servant), known for his radical views. When, on 5 December, the House of Commons voted for the acceptance of the latest offer by the King as the basis for a peaceful settlement in the kingdom, it was impossible to delay any longer, and the army moved into action.

On the morning of 6 December, Colonel Pride (previously a carter) took control of the entrances into Parliament without the knowledge of Fairfax, who sympathized with the Presbyterians, and detained members of Parliament according to a prepared list of those known for their hostile attitude to the army. A total of 140 members of Parliament were detained. As a result, the Independents acquired a solid majority in the House. Cromwell arrived in London in the evening of that same day, when the 'dirty work' was already done. Typically, he declared that he had known nothing of this plan, but as it had already hap-

pened, it had his approval and he would seek to support it. We have here an example of Cromwell's favourite political—as distinct from military—tactic, namely to guide events while himself remaining in the shadows until the desired moment was ripe. It is difficult to believe that something such as Pride's Purge could have taken place without his knowledge. It was as if he had been waiting for it to happen in order to arrive in the city that same day. Although nothing now prevented Charles I being put on trial (a detachment of cavalry headed by Colonel Harrison had brought him closer to the capital, lodging him in Windsor Palace), Cromwell hesitated at the last moment and made one final attempt to save the King's life, as Bishop Burnet reports. It was Ireton who insisted on the trial of the King. Cromwell was in doubt. According to one of the King's agents, Cromwell did not agree with the radical section of the army which demanded the execution of the King. 'I have been assured that Cromwell is retreating from them, his designs and theirs being incompatible as fire and water, they driving at a pure democracy and himself at an oligarchy.'<sup>73</sup> Even at the Army Council held on 25 December, Cromwell declared that if the King would agree to the conditions put to him, his life should be spared for purely political reasons. This was a crucial moment in the history of the revolution: the victory over the Presbyterians in Parliament, as a result of which Cromwell became the master of the political situation, made the 'left-baptist' tactic unnecessary. From now on the alliance with the Levellers was nothing more than a burdensome tribute to the past—Cromwell had no further need of it.

It would seem that only the resistance of the King on the one hand, and the insistence of the army radicals on the other obliged him, on the following day, to agree to the trial of Charles I. From then on Cromwell acted with his usual resolution. In reply to the doubts which were still being expressed as to the lawfulness of putting the sovereign on trial, Cromwell replied: 'I tell you we will cut off his head, with the crown on it.'<sup>74</sup>

On 6 January a special judicial chamber was created by Act of Parliament to try the King. On 27 January he was sentenced to death (although only 59 signed out of 135). On 30 January, Charles I was executed in front of an enormous crowd 'by the severinge of his head from his body...'



and Cromwell, pointing to 'the will of God', in fact carried out the will of the insurgent populace of England.

### **A REPUBLIC WITHOUT REPUBLICANISM, AND CROMWELL AS ITS SYMBOL**

The grandees, led by Cromwell, had apparently done the impossible, had excelled themselves. In the name of the people of England, they had finally done that which the army radicals had demanded in the autumn of 1647 — they had tried and executed the King, Charles I, had abolished royal power by Act of Parliament (17 March, 1649) as 'unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the Liberty, Safety, and publick Interest of the People of this Nation',<sup>75</sup> abolished the House of Lords and only on 19 May declared England 'a free commonwealth' to be governed by 'the representatives of the people in Parliament'.<sup>76</sup> This was the last act of which Cromwell — the Robespierre of the English revolution — was still capable.

Why, however, was the last decisively important constitutional act delayed for two months after the abolition of the monarchy? The answer is not far to seek. Cromwell, the main director of this drama, was far from being a republican by conviction. For him and his circle, as he himself admitted, this was simply 'a cruel necessity' undertaken in order to prevent the course of events slipping from their control. Although in his public declarations he termed the execution of the King an act 'which Christians in after times will mention with honour and tyrants look at with fear',<sup>77</sup> in his more intimate conversations he admitted 'that the King's head was not taken off because he was King, nor the Lords laid aside because Lords ... but because they did not perform their trust.'<sup>78</sup> There is nothing surprising, therefore, in the fact that the 1649 republic proved to be, in effect, merely an oligarchy concealed by the 'rump' of the Long Parliament, in which power was divided among the top army officers and the leaders of the 'rump'.

Suffice it to point out that of the 41 members of the State Council created by 'Parliament', 31 were simultaneously members of Parliament, while in both the Council and Parliament the tone was set by the ruling oli-

garchy. Finally, the conservative nature of this republic was clearly revealed by the proclamation declaring unchanged the fundamental laws of the country, which had taken shape under the feudal-monarchical system. This corresponded to Cromwell's desire for 'a settlement of somewhat of monarchical power in it'.<sup>79</sup> However, despite its obvious conservatism, the regime of the Independents was from the outset far from stable. First and foremost it found itself isolated internationally—the execution of the King had shaken the crowned rulers of Europe, and they recoiled from this 'regicide'. In Scotland, the son of the executed King was immediately proclaimed Charles II. Ireland, where, in addition to the Irish clans, the Marquis of Ormonde at the head of an army of Protestant colonialists also opposed the republic, was a possible bridgehead for intervention in England from outside. Cromwell rightly saw that the key to the political situation lay in the subordination of Ireland to the authority of the republic. 'I had rather be overrun with Cavalierish interest than a Scotch interest; I had rather be overrun with a Scotch interest, than an Irish interest; and I think of all this is most dangerous.'<sup>80</sup>

The identification of Ireland as representing the greatest danger was not based on purely political arguments. An Irish rebellion symbolized the threat of counter-reformation, which struck fear above all into all those social strata who had achieved promotion and prosperity as a result of acquiring monastery lands. The prime importance of suppressing an Irish rebellion was also dictated by the long-awaited confiscation of Irish land, used as 'security' by Parliament to obtain loans from the City since 1641. Furthermore, it was hoped to use this land to reward the commanding officers and to settle the outstanding pay of the ordinary soldiers.

However, before he could send a military expedition to Ireland, Cromwell had to face the profound discontent in the army and, beyond it, among the populace. As the oligarchical nature of the republic of the Independents became clearer, the more they felt they had been 'deceived' by Cromwell and his entourage. This was the final result of Cromwell's dalliance with the Levellers... During the second civil war, and in particular while preparations were in process for the trial of the King, the grandees had created the impression that they were seriously considering the

possibility of using the Levellers' draft constitution as the basis of the political administration of the country. A version of the Agreement of the People, edited by the Officers' Council, was put before Parliament (or, more accurately, its 'rump') in December, 1648. However, it had been swept under the carpet and so thoroughly forgotten during the creation of the institutions of the republic in 1649 that one might have thought that the grandees had never heard of it. What other recourse was left to the Levellers, ignored and deceived in their hopes by the politically more skilful grandees, except to warn their supporters in the army and outside it of the 'great deception' worked by Cromwell? A Leveller pamphlet of the day declared: 'You shall scarce speak to Cromwell about anything, but he will lay his hand on his breast, elevate his eyes and call God to record; he will weep, howl and repent, even while he doth smite you under the first rib. Oh, Cromwell, whither art thou aspiring?'<sup>81</sup> The growing discontent in the army and among the populace threatened to become an insuperable barrier to the Irish expedition. It was not without cause that Cromwell warned on 23 March: 'There is more cause of danger from disunion amongst ourselves than by anything from our enemies...'<sup>82</sup> Nor was he mistaken. The news that the army was shortly to be sent to Ireland was met by many units with the same indignation as in 1647. The grandees resolved first and foremost to isolate the Leveller leaders Lilburne, Walwyn, Overton and Prince, responsible for inciting discontent. They were arrested and brought before the State Council, behind the closed doors of which Lilburne heard Cromwell's hysterical cry: 'I tell you, sir ... you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them or they will break you, yea and bring all the guilt of the blood and treasure shed and spent in this kingdom upon your heads and shoulders, and frustrate and make void all that work...'<sup>83</sup>

The times and the political situation had changed, and with them Cromwell's tactic. Was it all that long ago that Cromwell had written to his cousin Hammond that there was no cause to fear the Levellers—they were one with him in opposing the Royalists and in demanding the trial of the King? Now that the 'silken Independents' were in power, the Levellers had become the most dangerous enemies of the regime. Even the Agreement of the People as edited by the officers now seemed fatal for the republic

established in the name of 'Liberty'. The spirit of revolt had once again taken hold of a number of army units. The regiments selected by lot to be sent to Ireland refused to leave London, while the Military Council hurriedly attempted to remove them from the capital. On 25 April, Whalley's dragoon regiment mutinied during such an attempt. Cromwell appeared on the scene, and in the absence of unity among the soldiers, quickly restored order. Fifteen 'initiators' were brought to trial and one of them, the twenty-three year old Robert Lockyer, was shot there and then. The funeral of Lockyer on 29 April became a mass political demonstration of support for the Levellers. However, the catastrophic position of the soldiers, who had not received their pay for many months, led many of them to despair. By the autumn of 1648 the outstanding pay owed to the army had reached £314 thousand. The prospect of being sent to Ireland was the last drop which caused the cup to overflow. On 9 May, when Cromwell reviewed the troops in Hyde Park, many again appeared with the Levellers' emblem, but this time Cromwell preferred the tactic of promises. He declared that the Long Parliament would soon be dissolved, fresh elections would be held on the basis of new electoral districts, and the soldiers would receive their pay. In the provinces, however, army discontent flared up with renewed force. The demonstrations took place under Leveller slogans. The greatest resistance was displayed by the dragoons in Oxford, led by Captain Thompson. In Salisbury Colonel Scrope's regiment rebelled, led by standard-bearer Thompson. The rebellion spread to the regiments of Iretton, Skippon and Harrison. They all resolved not to leave England until the Agreement of the People was adopted.

As before, now also disunity among the insurgents worked in Cromwell's favour. At the head of a cavalry detachment of 4,000 men he defeated the main force of the insurgents in one short but furious battle at Bureford. Captain Thompson perished heroically on the battlefield. The uprising by army Levellers was suppressed. Demonstrations by Levellers in Lancashire, Derbyshire, Somersetshire, and later in the Oxford garrison, were put down with the same ruthlessness. The England of the propertied classes breathed a sigh of relief. Parliament expressed 'the gratitude of the public' to Cromwell for his 'services to the nation'. Oxford University eagerly elected him an honor-

ary member. However, the most complaisant hypocrisy was shown by the City: only the day before they had expressed their hatred of Cromwell 'the regicide'; now they were so moved by his treatment of the Levellers that they organized a lavish dinner in his honour and presented him with costly gifts — gold and silver goblets.

The suppression of the army mutinies untied Cromwell's hands and noticeably increased the generosity of the City rich towards the republic. Preparations for the military expedition to Ireland were hastily completed, and Cromwell was appointed the commander-in-chief. On 13 August, a flotilla of 132 ships carrying 10,000 well-equipped soldiers, food supplies and arms left England, reaching Ireland, close to Dublin, the administrative centre of the country, two days later. By this time the military situation in the country had already taken a turn favourable to Parliament. Prior to Cromwell's arrival, Colonel Jones had defeated the troops of the Marquis of Ormonde, fighting in support of Charles II and blockading Dublin. They were thrown back to the north. Overall, however, the situation in Ireland was extremely complex. The authority of the English Parliament was acknowledged only in Dublin and its immediate environs. The parliamentary army under the command of Colonel Monk had proved unable to achieve more. Parliament was opposed by a wide diversity of forces: the army of Anglo-Irish Protestants under the leadership of the Marquis of Ormonde, and the Irish Catholics, also divided: on the one hand there were the royalist Anglo-Irish Catholics and on the other, the native Irish clans led by Owen O'Neill, hostile to the English as such as colonizers, regardless of their political sympathies, republican or monarchist. As a result, the parliamentary forces not only had a unique opportunity to set their enemies against each other (exploiting the enmity between Protestants and Catholics), but also to fight them separately. Meanwhile Blake, the newly-appointed admiral of the parliamentary fleet, cleared the Irish Sea of the royalist ships of Prince Rupert, thus securing regular supplies for the English expedition. As Cromwell was opposed, in effect, only by isolated sources of resistance, his entire tactic consisted in suppressing them separately. The first such source of resistance was Drogheda castle, of which it was said that to attack Drogheda was the same as to attack hell. Possessing a triple advantage in numbers

(10,000 against the 3,000 defenders of the castle) and absolute superiority in artillery, Cromwell stormed the fortress after the castle commandant refused to surrender. When the artillery had blown two breaches in the castle wall, the soldiers attacked, but were repulsed. Cromwell then personally led the second attack and broke through the fortifications. On his orders, reprisals were taken against the defenders of the castle which caused even veterans of the Thirty Years' War to shudder. All those captured bearing arms were killed on the spot. 'I think, that night they put to the sword about 2,000 men, divers of the officers and soldiers being fled over the Bridge into the other part of the Town, where about one hundred of them possessed St Peter's church-steeple...' <sup>84</sup> The uncontrolled soldiers then began to plunder the city. The English lost only 64 men.

'I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches,' <sup>85</sup> Cromwell wrote in his report to Parliament.

As a result, Drogheda became not only the symbol of the English military victory, but also the symbol of the ruthless severity of the conqueror (not only those who resisted, but even those who had surrendered were put to the sword). Cromwell's ruthlessness at Drogheda was clearly planned, and not only because of his enmity towards Catholics. His aim was to terrify the defenders of other fortresses so as to achieve as quickly as possible the pacification of Ireland and prevent major losses among his own troops. He pursued the same tactic in his next major battle on 14 October, the storming of Wexford castle to the south of Dublin. Here also, after resistance had ceased, no less than 2,000 people were put to the sword and the city was sacked.

However, as Cromwell penetrated further into the country, the tactic of intimidation did not yield the desired results. The Irish clans had no intention of laying down their arms. Despite his superiority in arms (the artillery played a decisive role in storming fortresses), he was obliged to conduct a long and exhausting battle for each fortified camp. When, after a hard winter which brought hunger and disease to the English troops, Cromwell besieged the town of Clomel in May, 1650, he suffered a heavy defeat: 1,200 defenders successfully repelled the much larger English force. In this battle Cromwell lost

around 2,000 men. Seeking to weaken the resistance of the Irish resolved on victory or death, he decided to show clemency and began to spare the garrisons which surrendered, forbidding plunder of the population. He was still unable, however, to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion. In May, 1650, he was urgently summoned back to England. Generals Ireton and Fleetwood, who took over command, spent many more long months quenching the fires of popular anger.

On arriving in Ireland, Cromwell had declared: 'We come (by the assistance of God) to hold forth and maintain the lustre and glory of English liberty ... wherein the people of Ireland ... may equally participate in all benefits, to use liberty and fortune equally with Englishmen.'<sup>86</sup> As a consequence of that arrival, one third of the population of Ireland perished during the conquest of the country by the English. Thousands more 'voluntarily' left their homeland, many hiring themselves out as landsknechts on the continent; even more, including women and children, were transported to American colonies as 'white servants'. According to the Act of Settlement for Ireland, all estates seized under arms were confiscated: in some cases entirely, in others—from two thirds to one fifth. However, the remaining share could only be received in the empty, unfertile region of Connaught, where the bulk of the native population was resettled. The 'purged' lands were sold to cover Parliament's debts to creditors and the army. Two thirds of Irish territory was transferred into the hands of new owners. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of the soldiers, lacking the means to set up as landowners, sold for next to nothing to their officers their right to a plot of land in Ireland. Thus the top officer elite, together with the creditors in the City, the bulwark of Cromwell's bourgeois-aristocratic dictatorship, constituted the new stratum of English landlords in Ireland.

'The English republic under Cromwell,' commented Marx, 'met shipwreck in Ireland.'<sup>87</sup>

Cromwell was hastily summoned back from Ireland because of the growing threat to the republic from Scotland. The son of the executed Charles I, who had been declared King in Scotland immediately on the execution of his father, had set off for Ireland and stopped on the Island of Jersey. There he awaited the outcome of Cromwell's military expedition. Clearly, given the situation in Ireland, it

was pointless to continue his intended journey. All hopes now lay with Scotland, where he had been proclaimed King as Charles II. However, Scottish military support for his claims to his father's throne was conditional upon his agreement to introduce the Presbyterian church system in England.

In accord with the Solemn League and Covenant, on 10 June, 1650, Charles II agreed to these conditions and left for Scotland. Parliament in London then decided to deliver a warning blow. However, as Fairfax, who was sympathetic to Presbyterianism, flatly refused to head an army being used not to defend the country but to invade Scotland, it was decided to place Cromwell in command. Seeking to persuade Fairfax not to refuse to join the campaign, Cromwell argued: 'That there will be war between us [that is, between England and Scotland], I fear, is unavoidable. Your Excellency will soon determine whether it be better to have this war in the bowels of another country or of our own, and that it will be one of them, I think it without scruple.'<sup>88</sup>

Having rejected the proposed honour out of hand, Fairfax noted, not without justification, that the probability of war was not sufficient grounds for attacking a neighbour. However, the logic of Cromwell, particularly after Ireland, already anticipated that of Napoleon. Believing in his 'lucky star', which he named as no other than 'the witness of Providence', Cromwell again transformed the army from the bulwark of popular revolution into a weapon of external conquest. On 26 June, 1650, after Fairfax' resolute refusal to lead the march into Scotland, Parliament appointed Cromwell 'captain-general and commander-in-chief of all forces ... within the Commonwealth of England'. With 10,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry he marched to the north at the end of June, and on 22 July crossed the Scottish border. The Scots fielded against him an army of 18,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry under the command of David Leslie, an experienced soldier who had fought in the Thirty Years' War. In order to understand the specific nature of this military campaign by Cromwell, one non-military factor must be taken into account. In the war against the Scots, religious differences played a far lesser role than in the Irish expedition. The profound enmity between Catholics and Protestants, which largely determined the attitude of



nations to each other in those days, had played an important role in sustaining the militant spirit of the English soldiers in Ireland. The military expedition to Scotland, however, was quite another matter: the Scots were not only fellow Protestants, but were also as opposed to Anglicanism as the supporters of the English Parliament. As to the disagreement between Presbyterians and Independents, this was largely without any ethnic undertone, for the parliamentary camp itself was also thus divided. Therefore, on arriving in Scotland, Cromwell immediately called for a 'friendly' settlement without recourse to weapons. 'Since we came in Scotland, it hath been our desire and longing to have avoided blood in this business...' <sup>89</sup> Only if the matter should go as far as a war 'God shall please to order the decision of this controversy by the sword...' <sup>90</sup>

Despite the numerical advantage of the Scots, Leslie wisely contented himself with a defensive strategy, wearing out the English with small-scale clashes and trying to lure them deeper into the country in order to cut them off from their supplies, surround and defeat them. Cromwell, on the contrary, appreciating the difficulty of fighting in a mountainous country, sought a decisive battle. His opponent, however, kept to the highlands and remained, particularly as regards the cavalry, invulnerable.

Not venturing to storm the strongly fortified city of Edinburgh, and having lost hope of tempting Leslie out into the valley, Cromwell marched in September to Dunbar, where he decided to wait for reinforcements. Leslie followed on his heels, preparing a trap from which it seemed impossible to escape. Cromwell's position was becoming more perilous with every day. The only road to Berkeley, linking him to England, was cut off by the Scots. His munition and food supplies were running out, hunger and disease were carrying off more and more of his men. Of 16 thousand, he had no more than 11 thousand left. Many began to lose heart and proposed that the infantry be taken on board ship, leaving the cavalry to its fate. However, when the last ray of hope seemed to have gone, the impossible happened: Leslie brought his army down into the valley in order to meet Cromwell in battle. With twice the number of troops (22 thousand), he was confident of success. He drew up his

troops in the then standard order (infantry in the centre and cavalry on the flanks), concentrating his main cavalry force on the right so as to attack the English from the side and the rear. Many believed Cromwell's position to be hopeless, and he himself had all but given up hope of victory. However, this loss of faith lasted only until he noticed the fatal weakness in the Scottish battle position. With the mountains to his rear, Leslie was unable to manoeuvre. The left flank in particular was trapped between the hills and the river. Immediately, Cromwell conceived of a battle plan: having mounted a sham attack on this flank, virtually condemned to immobility, he then regrouped his forces under cover of night, gathering his main force against Leslie's right flank. Drawn up in battle order, the Scots waited all night for the attack, but Cromwell delayed. It was only in the dim light of dawn, when the tired soldiers of Leslie's army were preparing to rest, and the officers had departed to quarter in nearby houses, that Cromwell mounted his attack. The Scots were not, however, taken completely unawares. They lined up in battle position fairly quickly and successfully repulsed the first attack by Cromwell's cavalry, also throwing back his infantry. At that critical moment in the battle, Cromwell himself rode onto the battlefield at the head of the cavalry reserve. Under his attack, the Scottish right flank was forced further and further back, thus exposing the infantry. It was this which Cromwell now attacked with his cavalry, while his infantry attacked from the front. Pressed in on all sides, the Scots, unable to regroup or retreat, finally collapsed in disarray. It was all over within an hour. The first rays of the rising sun revealed the dreadful spectacle of the battlefield.

Three thousand Scots fell, and ten thousand surrendered. The entire wagon train and artillery were captured. Cromwell averred that his losses amounted to only twenty men. Before his own eyes a miracle had occurred: he had dreamt only of rescue, and had won such a victory! Reporting to Parliament, Cromwell declared: 'Thus you have the prospect of one of the most signal mercies God hath done for England and His people, this war.'<sup>91</sup> Shortly after Dunbar, Cromwell took possession of Edinburgh. Here he faced a harsh Scottish winter, fell seriously ill, and only recovered towards

spring. The war, however, was still not over. The coronation of Charles II (1 January, 1651) only further strengthened the alliance between the Presbyterians and the Royalists, who decisively rejected any idea of peace with the republic. A large army was again recruited under Leslie's command. When Cromwell realized that, as a result of Leslie's defensive strategy, the English troops would not be able to avoid a second winter campaign in the mountains, he decided to take a risk: he opened up to Leslie the road leading south to England. It was as if the Scots had been waiting precisely for this. Led by Charles II, they rapidly marched into England, meeting only feeble resistance by individual parliamentary units. Meanwhile Cromwell followed on their heels and, when Charles decided to march towards London, overtook them with amazing speed, blocking their path at Worcester. On 3 September, 1651, the anniversary of the battle of Dunbar, the decisive battle took place: against 31 thousand English the Scots could field only 6 thousand. Charles II's hopes that his ranks would be swelled by English Royalists proved mistaken. Firstly, they had been thoroughly defeated in the second civil war and, secondly, however they viewed Parliament, the English Royalists nonetheless did not wish to receive a king from the hands of a foreign conqueror. Not surprisingly, the Scots were completely defeated at Worcester, with almost no one avoiding either death or capture. Charles II barely managed to flee. Worcester proved to be the end of Scottish independence; the Scottish Parliament was dissolved, the customs barriers demolished, and the English legal and tax system introduced. Although the victors did not undertake any mass land confiscation and refrained from the barbarities perpetrated in Ireland, the republic created by the Independents also functioned here as the oppressor of a smaller nation.

On 17 September, 1651, Cromwell returned to the capital, which organized a ceremonial welcome of unprecedented splendour. His fame was now at its zenith and resounded far beyond the borders of England. Parliament heaped presents upon him: in addition to the palace of Whitehall given to him earlier, he was offered the royal summer palace at Hampton Court, and was granted estates to the annual value of £4,500.

## THE COLLAPSE OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE PROTECTORATE OF CROMWELL

It seemed that the victorious sword of Cromwell had definitively consolidated the republic of the Independents. The danger of a royalist intervention had been eliminated. The military art of the general had been convincingly demonstrated twice, at Dunbar and Worcester, and had strengthened the international prestige of the republic. In 1650 the republic was officially recognized by Spain, and two years later this example was followed by France, and then the overseas English colonies of Virginia and Maryland, and also the West Indies.

However, even as the republic was growing stronger externally, it was weakening politically within. The main reason was that the domestic policy it pursued was dictated wholly and entirely by the class egoism of the class allies. As we have already discovered, the republic of 1649 completely ignored the interests of the peasantry, that is of the class to which, more than any other, it owed its existence. The copyholders were not freed from the power of the landowners: their obligations, legal subordination, lack of rights — all these attributes of the 'old regime' were left untouched. In the question of common land, the republic defended the enclosures, moreover with even less hesitation than the royal power which it had destroyed. A vivid illustration of this policy was the brutal repression of colonies of landless poor, the so-called Diggers, which appeared on empty land in a number of counties (in order to cultivate it). Refusing these paupers the opportunity to feed themselves by the labour of their own hands, the republic gave free rein to the 'noble' plunderers of common land who enclosed them for their own exclusive use, inflicting irreparable damage on a large number of small-scale farmers. The sale of the estates of delinquents, sanctioned by acts of Parliament in 1651-1652, was carried through on terms which virtually excluded their division into smaller units, a measure which might have lessened the land hunger in the countryside (the requirement that the value of the land be repaid over a few weeks enabled a clique of land speculators, members of Parliament, parliamentary creditors and top army officers to make fortunes). The republic did nothing either to deal with mass

unemployment and rising prices which doomed the urban and rural poor to semi-starvation, nor to reduce taxes or abolish the church tithe, which provoked general indignation, nor yet to reform the judicial system inherited from the monarchy.

The class egoism of the rulers of the republic was so manifest that even Cromwell found it necessary to conclude his report in Parliament on the victory at Dunbar with the appeal: 'Disown yourselves, but own your authority, and improve it to curb the proud and the insolent,... relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of poor prisoners in England; be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions; and if there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a Commonwealth.'<sup>92</sup> We shall not believe the sincerity of the general as regards the suffering poor. What was shortly to follow proved that these words expressed a political tactic. The reference to the 'oppressed' concealed his discontent with Presbyterian imposition in Parliament, whose corruption, self-enrichment, and self-aggrandizement threatened the existence of the republic no less than royalist conspiracies. Whatever may have led Cromwell to make this statement, however, it nonetheless revealed the essence of the policy of Parliament very clearly. Finally, the hoped-for freedom of conscience was also not established by the republic. Radical Millenarian sects, Ranters and Anabaptists were seen as inciters to rebellion and were especially liable to persecution.

When at last it became clear that, on the one hand, the 'rump' of the Long Parliament had degenerated into a group of unconcealed dealers exploiting their position simply to increase their own wealth and, on the other, that covert Royalists were prepared to exploit the growing discontent among the populace, Cromwell yet again moved across to the 'opposition'. In August, 1651, the Officers' Council handed a petition to Parliament in which, in addition to demands for overdue pay, there was a call for the legal reform and the abolition of the church tithe; the demand for a fixed date for the dissolution of Parliament and new elections was omitted on the insistence of Cromwell. However, as Cromwell himself later admitted, he used every available opportunity to remind the 'rump' of the need to set a limit to its own power. It was only under extreme pressure that the 'rump' set a date for its own dissolution — November, 1654. However, in the draft Bill for a

New Representative, the members of the Long Parliament were not required to stand for re-election, but were automatically members of the new Parliament and, moreover, all future Parliaments. That was the first point. Secondly, only the 'rump' had the right in the future to determine the lawfulness of the election of any member of Parliament.

Cromwell made persistent efforts to have the text of this bill amended. When the leaders of Parliament realized that the army officers would never agree to such a law, they decided to manoeuvre and pass it behind their backs. They assured Cromwell that for the moment no decision would be taken on this issue. Then, the following day, when Cromwell was absent from the House, they hastily discussed the bill preparatory to adopting it. On learning of this deception, Cromwell fell into a fury. He set off for Parliament without even changing his attire (in a black smock and grey hose), not forgetting to take with him a few dozen musketeers. What happened next is eloquently reported by Ludlow in his memoirs: 'Cromwell ... makes haste to the House, where he sat down and heard the debate for some time. Then calling to Major-General Harrison, who was on the other side of the House, to come to him, he told him, that he judged the Parliament ripe for a dissolution, and this to be the time of doing it. The Major-General answered, as he since told me; "Sir, the work is very great and dangerous, therefore I desire you seriously to consider of it before you engage in it". "You say well", replied the General, and thereupon sat still for about a quarter of an hour; and then the question for passing the Bill being to be put, he said again to Major-General Harrison, "this is the time I must do it"; and suddenly standing up, made a speech, wherein he loaded the Parliament with the vilest reproaches, charging them not to have a heart to do anything for the publick good, to have espoused the corrupt interest of Presbytery and the lawyers, who were the supporters of tyranny and oppression, accusing them of an intention to perpetuate themselves in power, had they not been forced to the passing of this Act,... and thereupon told them, that the Lord had done with them and had chosen other instruments for the carrying on His work that were more worthy. This he spoke with so much passion and discomposure of mind, as if he had been distracted. Sir Peter Wentworth stood up to answer him, and said, that this was the first time that ever

he had heard such unbecoming language given to the Parliament, and that it was the more horrid in that it came from their servant,... but as he was going on, the General stept into the midst of the House, where continuing his distracted language, he said, "Come, come, I will put an end to your prating"; then walking up and down the House like a mad-man, and kicking the ground with his feet, he cried out, "You are no Parliament, I say you are no Parliament; I will put an end to your sitting; call them in, call them in": whereupon the serjeant attending the Parliament opened the doors, and Lieutenant-Colonel Worsley with two files of musqueteers entred the House; which Sir Henry Vane observing from his place, said aloud, "This is not honest, yea it is against morality and common honesty". Then Cromwell fell railing at him, crying out with a loud voice, "O Sir Henry Vane, Sir Henry Vane, the Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane." Then looking upon one of the members, he said "There sits a drunkard"; and giving much reviling language to others, he commanded the mace to be taken away, saying, "What shall we do with this bauble? Here, take it away".

'When the Speaker refused to leave his chair at Harrison's suggestion, the latter helped him down. Then Cromwell applied himself to the members of the House,... and said to them, "It's you that have forced me to this, for I have sought the Lord night and day, that He would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work".'

Thereupon Cromwell 'ordered the guard to see the House clear'd of all the members and then seized upon the records... After which he went to the clerk, and snatching the Act of Dissolution, which was ready to pass,... he put it under his cloak.' (April 20, 1653.)<sup>93</sup>

In the evening of the same day, the fate of Parliament was shared by the State Council it had elected. In vain did Bradshaw, the chairman, former President of the Council and a judge who had pronounced the death sentence on the King, warn Cromwell of 'the dangerous consequences' when the nation learned of what he had done. In fact the news was met with great satisfaction by the people. As the Venetian ambassador reported, echoing the words of Cromwell himself, 'there was not so much as the barking of a dog...'<sup>94</sup> For a time Cromwell was once more the most popular man in the country. The supporters of the radical sects again believed in him and began to hope that he

would free the nation from its 'Egyptian bondage'. Even the 'true steward', Gerard Winstanley, dedicated his 'Law of Freedom' to him. 'The English people themselves, in the person of Cromwell, dissolved the Long Parliament' — such was Marx's later assessment of this event. For the last time Cromwell displayed his outstanding capacities as a revolutionary.

Thus, according to Cromwell's own conclusion, he had dissolved the 'rump' of the Long Parliament because it had sought to retain permanent power at the helm of the nation, because of its total indifference to the needs and aspirations of the people, and this despite the fact that the officers, particularly after Worcester, had sought to persuade it of the need to carry through the proposed measures for the 'common weal' of the people. As to the nature of these measures, Cromwell, as we recall, had described it in more than general terms in his report to Parliament on the victory at Dunbar. But who were the people whom Cromwell had termed 'more worthy' to carry on the work of the Lord as he dissolved the 'rump'? He well realized that to seek these people by means of 'free elections' to a new Parliament was too great a risk while there existed the real threat that the Royalists and Presbyterians would use the growing discontent of the masses with the policy of the republic to win a majority in that Parliament. This left very little room for manoeuvre, limited to two groups who held radically differing positions on the question of the political organization of the country: General Lambert, who supported a plan to govern the country provisionally by means of a small State Council established by the army, and Harrison, who supported the so-called 'Millenarians', who dreamed of government by the 'saints'. Neither of these projects was acceptable to Cromwell insofar as neither included even the appearance of a Parliament — that symbol of 'popular will'. Nonetheless, Harrison's proposal came closer to his purpose, and this was the one Cromwell fixed upon. However, how was he to select these people, and how many were they to be? At the Officers' Council it was decided to convene as a Parliament those 'godly men' who enjoyed the respect of representatives of the church congregations. In July, 1653, 140 men selected by the Officers' Council from candidates put forward by church congregations from the various counties (in effect most of those chosen were candidates put



forward by the Officers' Council itself), gathered in London. This assembly of the 'saints', soon to become known as the Little or 'Barebones' Parliament, was as internally heterogeneous as the army from within which it had been selected. This Parliament owes its name to the nickname of one of its members ('Praisegod Barebones—Praise-God Barbon'), a London pelt merchant who was also a Baptist preacher.

However, it soon proved unacceptable to the officer elite, above all because the tone was set by the 'dangerous' 'religious enthusiasts', 'fanatics', as the representatives of the common people soon came to be called. It was not they, however, who constituted the majority: of the 140 members, 115 were justices of the peace, and 55 were to become members of later Parliaments. In other words, they were mainly members of the rural gentry, with a rather conservative outlook. Although the radical core was in the minority (around 40-60 members of the assembly), it inspired fear in the grandees with the unpredictability of its plans and actions.

The Little Parliament, however, deserves our attention if only because it offers us a unique opportunity to learn what actually lay behind the appeals addressed by Cromwell and the officers to the 'rump', calling upon it to carry through measures for the public good. On 4 July, 1653, Cromwell delivered to the assembly a long speech laced with Millenarian phraseology. 'Truly you are called by God to rule with Him, and for Him.' 'I confess I never looked to see such a day as this...' 'And why should we be afraid to say or think, that this may be the door to usher in the things that God has promised; which have been prophesied of, which He has set the hearts of His people to wait for and expect?' '...We are at the threshold; and therefore it becomes us to lift up our heads, and encourage ourselves in the Lord.' '...You are at the edge of the promises and prophecies...' <sup>95</sup>

It took only a short time, however, for Cromwell to repent his 'enthusiasm' for the 'saints'. It turned out that the assembly of 'the godly' was indeed seriously intending to carry through far-reaching reforms in various spheres of public life. Having declared its intention to become the instrument for overthrowing all forms of oppression and removing every obstacle preventing all the needy and burdened from enjoying the blessing of God, the Parliament

of the 'saints' formed committees, each of which was to draw up the appropriate reforms. For example, they appointed committees to reform the legal system, financial system, church organization and marriage, and to draw up recommendations for assistance to the poor and the victims of enclosure. The very first steps taken by the Little Parliament reveal that it did not intend to limit itself to debate. It began by abolishing the farming out of tax collection, a system which enriched the collectors at the expense of the treasury. It was planning to abolish excise, particularly burdensome for the poor, and was debating a bill for the reform of the Chancery Court (the supreme court in civil cases). Church marriage was replaced with civil marriage (the civil registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced for the first time). Voices were raised demanding that taxation should be levied in proportion to income. The question of the church tithe was also close to solution—let the clergy be supported by those who have need of them. Such was the simple and bold formula of the radically-minded section of the Parliament of the 'saints'. When Cromwell heard of this, he realized that this time he was facing the danger of 'levelling' within the very walls of the legislative organ. In order to understand Cromwell's reaction to the threat of the abolition of the church tithe, let us recall that Cromwell himself was one of the secular landowners (impropriators) who benefited from the church tithe, and that a large number of the rural gentry had a vested interest in retaining it as a form of 'revenue'. It is not surprising that the officer elite headed by Lambert began a campaign of slander and harassment against the Little Parliament. Who could say how far this Parliament would go? If today it was encroaching on the tithe, then tomorrow it might not hesitate to abolish the copyholders' rent to the landowner. The landowners were frightened by the spectre of a 'levelling of wealth', 'anarchy', 'lawlessness'. The officers, having decided to end the Short Parliament, joined in a conspiracy with its moderate members. On 12 December, 1653, the conservatively-minded 'saints' appeared early in the House, when a large number of the radical 'saints', not suspecting any plot, had still not arrived. The sitting began with a speech by one of the 'moderates', who charged Parliament with seeking to abolish the clergy, property and law. The orator concluded by proposing that Parliament be declared dissolved on the

grounds that its activity would not be to the benefit of the state. Without even putting this proposition to the vote, the Speaker rose from his seat and, accompanied by 66 members of the assembly, left for Whitehall, where he told Cromwell of the decision by Parliament to hand its powers to him. Those who refused to leave the House of the 'saints' (around 97 members), were expelled with the help of musketeers. Cromwell, as was his wont, acted as if he had known nothing whatsoever of what was to happen. In reality, of course, he was sufficiently informed about everything, including the officers' plans to bring about the 'self-dissolution' of the Parliament of the 'saints'. Characteristically, at the opening of a later Parliament he was barely able to find the words to describe the danger in which, in his opinion, the England of the property owners had found itself during the period of the 'Parliament of the saints'. 'And what did they? Fly at liberty and property, in-somuch as if one man had twelve cows, they held another, that wanted cows ought to take a share with his neighbour. Who could have said anything was their own, if they had gone on?'<sup>96</sup> Yet, if that were so, what did Cromwell mean by: 'To desire and use all the fair and lawful means we could have had the nation reap the fruit of all the blood and treasure that had been spent in this cause...'<sup>97</sup> It is obvious that here the concept of the 'nation' reaping the 'fruit' did not include the poor, or – which is the same – by 'fruit' he meant only those 'reforms' which did not touch the existing 'balance of property ownership' in the country.

Now the initiative as regards the political 'settlement' of the nation had been entirely transferred to the officer elite headed by Lambert. The famous Instrument of Government revealed that its authors saw the only solution in the concentration of executive power in one person. In accord with this 'Instrument', Cromwell was declared Lord Protector of England on 16 December, 1653. In his speech following the ceremony of taking the oath, Cromwell promised to govern in such a way that 'the Gospel might flourish in its full splendor and purity; and the people enjoy their just Rights and Propriety.'<sup>98</sup>

From the point of view of contemporaries (such as the radicals, the Presbyterians and the 'republicans'), Cromwell had finally thrown off the mask beneath which he had concealed his intentions. He had achieved his goal, to which he had been moving by a circuitous, deceptive route

from at least the autumn of 1648, if not the very beginning, and along which lay the milestones of the execution of the King and the dissolution of the 'rump'. It seems to us that in fact it was the objective development of events towards the end of 1653 which led the grandees to adopt this solution. Fear in the face of the populace took Cromwell and his entourage further and further away from the ideals of the republic and towards the idea of autocratic power. Thus Christopher Hill, a contemporary English historian, is right when he emphasizes that the reasons for the creation of the Protectorate cannot be understood without taking into account what was, for Cromwell and his circle, the bitter experience of the Short Parliament. In those circumstances they had no other choice. Cromwell was a famous military leader of civil and foreign wars, the only man whose name alone ensured the obedience of the army and inspired fear in both domestic and external counter-revolution. The 'natural' ruler of a nation threatened from without and in ferment within, Cromwell was not, as we recall, a convinced republican. As far back as December, 1651, during a conference with Lenthall, the Speaker of the House, he had declared: 'We should consider, whether a Republic, or a mixed Monarchical Government will be best to be settled? And if anything Monarchical, then, in whom that power shall be placed?'<sup>99</sup> Cromwell was not one of those who are blinded by arrogance. Of himself he said: 'I am a poor, weak creature...; yet accepted to serve the Lord and His people. Indeed,... you know not me, my weaknesses, my inordinate passions, my unskilfulness, and everyway unfitness to my work. Yet, yet the Lord, who will have mercy on whom He will, does as you see.'<sup>100</sup> He was sincere when he declared to the first Parliament of the Protectorate: 'I called not myself to this place.'<sup>101</sup>

Although, in fact, the revolution ended with the defeat of the Levellers, for Cromwell it ended with the 'failure' of the Parliament of the 'saints'. With that he suffered the defeat of his chief aspiration—to 'reform' England without touching the privileges and interests of his class allies, that is, the England of the landowners. This was the crux of his political ideal at that point in the revolution when the main task was to give its results juridical confirmation. From then on, Cromwell the revolutionary became the constable of a country torn apart by contradictions. His main support, the army, underwent a transformation similar to that

of its general: the radical elements, bearers of wide-ranging social ideals, were forced out of its ranks. This also affected the officers. After the dissolution of the Short Parliament, Major-General Harrison, Colonel Rich and their supporters were expelled from the army, and Cromwell the Protector was surrounded only by officers of 'noble blood' such as Desborough, Sydenham and Montague. In other words, it was no longer anything other than an army of hired men maintained by the tax-payers and unquestioningly obeying its gentlemen-officers. The establishment of the Protectorate was accompanied in every sphere of public life by a sharp swing to the right. We shall cite a few illustrations.

The nephew of the Earl of Manchester (earlier an enemy of Cromwell), Edward Montague, was appointed admiral of the fleet: the place of the dismissed Colonel Rich was taken by a member of the Howard family, famous for his reactionary views even under the monarchy.

According to the Instrument of Government, legislative power in the country was entrusted to the Protector and Parliament, while executive power lay with the Protector and the State Council. In terms of the range of power placed in his hands, Cromwell might have earned the envy of any 'lawful' monarch: he was the commander-in-chief of the army and the fleet, controlled the financial and judicial systems, conducted foreign policy, and, in consultation with the State Council, had the power to declare war and conclude peace. Finally, when Parliament was in recess, his ordinances had the force of law. On 16 December, 1653, the solemn ceremony of 'inaugurating' Cromwell into his duties as Lord Protector was held at Westminster Palace. At this ceremony he appeared in purely civilian dress—a black velvet costume had replaced the leather jerkin, and shoes and hose had replaced the boots with jangling spurs, while his field coat had given way to a black cloak and his hat was decorated with a gold band.

Paradoxical as it may seem, Cromwell the Protector was more acceptable to the propertied classes than Cromwell, member of Parliament, or Cromwell, idol of the army. His autocratic rule heralded in their eyes a return to a 'traditional' (monarchical) form of government and it was as if Cromwell was doing all he could to win their trust and favour. He demonstrated in every way possible his sympathy for the aristocracy: reference has already been

made to the appointment of Edward Montague, nephew of the Earl of Manchester, as admiral of the fleet. He made three barons members of the State Council, and availed himself of the opportunity to recall that he himself was by birth a 'gentleman of position'. What had happened to his former 'ambivalence' which had given rise to doubts in the face of each political decision? Having freed himself of every last trace of democracy, having abandoned liberal phraseology, Cromwell now turned his passionate eloquence against the danger from the left. The slightest reference to the danger posed by the Levellers, only recently his allies, caused him to shudder. Now he hurled thunderbolts against them: 'A nobleman, a gentleman, a yeoman? (That is a good interest of the Nation and a great one). The magistracy of the nation, was it not almost trampled under foot, under despite and contempt by men of Levelling principles?.. did not that Levelling principle tend to the reducing all to an equality?.. What was the design, but to make the tenant as liberal a fortune as the landlord?.. it was a pleasing voice to all poor men, and truly not unwelcome to all bad men'.<sup>102</sup>

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the government's instrument of repression was now directed primarily against the radical elements. Harsh persecution was launched not only against the militant Millenarians, who ventured to undertake open armed resistance, but even against wholly peaceful protesters such as the Quakers, who placed their hope not in the force of weapons but in the power of the word, on 'inner illumination'. Strict censorship of the written word was introduced, and newspapers which displayed the slightest independence were closed down. In January, 1655, a former Leveller, Overton, who had led an attempted army uprising in Scotland, was arrested, followed a month later by John Wildman, who had represented the civilian Levellers at the Putney conference.

However, despite its sharp turn to the right, the new regime also faced opposition from certain sections of the propertied classes, be it secret Royalists who supported the Stuarts, or so-called republicans who had still not accepted Cromwell's dissolution of the 'rump' of the Long Parliament. This opposition made itself known in the very first Parliament of the Protectorate, convened on 3 September, 1654. Cromwell brought in troops and demanded

of all the members of Parliament that they recognize the new regime—those who refused were automatically excluded from Parliament (over a hundred members). However, when, even after this purge, the parliamentary opposition revealed no inclination to 'co-operate', Cromwell, on 22 January, 1655, dissolved Parliament.

The reality produced by the policy of 'reconciling the parties' among the propertied classes had proved to be the exact opposite of the desired result. The wealthy of the City did not prove more generous towards the Protectorate regime. The republican supporters of oligarchical government, acting in the name of 'the defence of the constitution', continued to see in Cromwell a 'usurper', while the Royalists continued their intrigues and preparations for open rebellion.

The budget deficit became an incurable ill of the Protectorate. The maintenance of the army and the fleet demanded huge sums which were not covered by the usual revenue from taxation. All the lands confiscated in the course of revolution had been sold off. The City, not believing in the stability of the regime, refused to grant credit. At times the situation became so critical that they resorted to collecting resources by voluntary pledge, the name of the Protector opening the list of contributors. The continuation of the war-time taxes provoked widespread discontent, which the Royalists then sought to exploit in March, 1655. Revolts occurred in a number of towns, but so small in scale that they were suppressed in a few days. However, those whose wealth was based on confiscated lands had received yet another reminder of the extent to which their own prosperity was bound up with the Protectorate. This was used by Cromwell. In the summer of 1655 the country was divided into twelve districts, over which were appointed major-generals given special powers to maintain 'law and order'. The rule of the major-generals, as it was termed, rendered transparently obvious the fact that the Protectorate could survive only on the basis of extraordinary measures relying on the army, cemented together by the name of Cromwell.

The domestic policy of the Protectorate, limited to the guard duties of a constable, contrasted with its foreign policy, dominated by the interests of the bourgeois future of the country. The core of these interests was the subordination of England's European policy to her extra-European

expansion, facilitating the seizure of overseas colonies. This explains why Cromwell did not blindly pursue the principle of supporting Protestantism everywhere at any price. Having concluded peace with the Netherlands (1654), Cromwell had to decide on his next step: was he to take the side of Spain or France? His choice in favour of an alliance with France was determined not only by the desire to deny Charles Stuart French support in his claims to the English throne, but also by the fact that this offered more favourable conditions for English colonial expansion.

Spain, the largest colonial power of the day, was clearly in decline, and the Spanish West Indian colonies seemed an easy prey. As far back as December, 1654, an English military expedition of 38 ships had been dispatched with the aim of seizing Hispaniola. Although, in place of Hispaniola, they had had to content themselves with the minor island of Jamaica, a start had nonetheless been made. In reply, Spain had recalled her ambassador to London and declared war on England. That same day, Cromwell signed the agreement on an alliance with France, in which there was a secret clause containing a promise by Cardinal Mazarin not to allow Charles Stuart to enter France. Instead of the easy prey of the West Indies, England now faced a long and expensive war against Spain—the first clearly colonial war waged by bourgeois England. Cromwell had to turn once again to Parliament for assistance. The second Parliament of the Protectorate opened on 17 September, 1656, and although this time the State Council confirmed only 300 of the 400 members of Parliament, even this ‘purged’ Parliament proved far from submissive and attacked the rule of the major-generals, abolishing it by a vote of 212 to 20. Although the officer elite was furious, the Protector unexpectedly approved the act, either because he himself found interference by this elite in affairs of state burdensome, or because he was faced with disaster without parliamentary subsidies. Inspired by this unexpected support, the members of Parliament decided to take the next step: to make Cromwell king, and thus exclude the Stuart dynasty from the throne. This measure had a double aim: to give the post-revolutionary regime a ‘traditional’, constitutional basis which would guarantee its stability, while also making it far less expensive, since it would no longer have to rely on a standing army.



On 27 February, 1657, Christopher Packe, member of Parliament for London and director of the Merchant Adventurers' Company, put before the House the proposal that Cromwell be invited to accept the title of king and re-establish the House of Lords. On 25 March, by a majority of votes (123 for, 63 against), it was decided to present Cromwell with an official petition which was, in effect, the draft of a new constitution. It would be an exaggeration to say that the 'Humble Petition and Advice' provoked Cromwell's ire. When the parliamentary delegation came to hand the Petition to him, he thanked them for the honour shown to him. He well realized that to accept the crown would also put an end to the uncertainty of his position, his dependence on the officer elite in the army, and would have reconciled a considerable portion of the Royalists to the new regime. However, this time, so decisive on the field of battle, Cromwell hesitated. In vain the parliamentary lawyers sought to convince him of that of which he had long since been convinced. He was fearful of possible public opinion in the country, and particularly in the army. As was to be expected, the officer elite sharply opposed such a plan. Only four days after Packe's proposal, 100 officers came to see the Protector with the request that he not agree to it. The title of king, they declared, 'was not pleasing to his army' and was a 'matter of scandal to the people of God'.<sup>103</sup> Fleetwood, Desborough and Lambert threatened to resign. Pride threatened that if Cromwell accepted the title of king, he would kill him at the first opportunity. In Parliament itself, the proposal aroused the indignation of the republicans. Not without hesitation and a difficult internal struggle, Cromwell refused.

In a speech delivered on 13 April, 1657, Cromwell had spoken very ambiguously on this very subject: 'I do not think the thing necessary',<sup>104</sup> emphasizing at the same time that he did not find it possible to set out his arguments on this subject.

Around this time, Whitelocke wrote that the Protector 'was satisfied in his private judgement that it was fit for him to take ... *the Title of King*'. However, he also observed that 'by solicitation of the Commonwealth's Men and fearing a Mutiny and Defection of a great part of the Army, his mind changed; and many of the Officers of the Army gave out high Threatenings against him in case he should do it.'<sup>105</sup> On 8 May came, at last, a decisive refusal. 'I am

persuaded to return this answer to you, that I cannot undertake this Government with that title of King'.<sup>106</sup> To other points in the petition, however, he gave his consent.

Lambert and his colleagues paid with their positions, but they nonetheless achieved their aim—Cromwell remained wholly dependent on the army. On 26 June, 1657, the new constitution was solemnly affirmed. Although the rule of the major-generals has been abolished, Cromwell's power had not weakened; he remained the absolute ruler of the country.

After the taking of the oath, the speaker of the House placed a scarlet cloak trimmed with ermine around Cromwell's shoulders, fastened a sword round his waist and placed a sceptre and a bible in his hands. The army, purged of 'discontents', was still loyal to the Protector. The spy network headed by Thurloe kept vigilant watch over his safety. His residence at Whitehall exceeded in luxury and splendour many European royal palaces. The Protector's star also shone beyond the borders of England. In return for military aid against Spain, France offered Cromwell the right to Dunkirk, a port on the coast of Flanders. A year later, after a brilliant victory by Cromwell's soldiers (under the command of Turenne) over the Spaniards, Dunkirk and its external port of Mardique became English possessions. The King of Sweden, Karl Gustav, tried in vain to conclude an alliance with Cromwell in his attempts to turn the Baltic into a Swedish lake. Cromwell preferred the role of mediator between Sweden and Denmark, using this to secure the most advantageous conditions for English trade in this region.

An alliance with Portugal (1654) opened up a potentially large market to English trade. Cromwell entertained plans to expel the Dutch from New Amsterdam and the French from Canada. Above all, however, Cromwell laid the foundations of Great Britain, incorporating Scotland and Ireland within the English political system.

Nonetheless, despite these successes in his foreign policy, the popularity of the Protector's regime steadily declined at home. The Spanish war undermined foreign trade. Many craftsmen, especially those in the cloth industry, were without work. Large numbers of peasants faced the unrestricted power of the landowners. The Ordinance of 1656 confirmed the abolition of knightly holdings, and left the copyholders still without rights as landholders 'at

the will of the lord' (which, with the transfer of many estates into the hands of new owners meant, in effect, the abolition of even those precarious 'manor customs' which had limited that 'will' to some extent in the past). The Protectorate encouraged the activity of the fens drainers, against whom the modest rural squire Oliver Cromwell had once taken up arms. The Bill to prevent depopulation and improve wastes, introduced in Parliament in 1656, was rejected, as it was suspected of containing an infringement on property rights. The reform of the law which Cromwell had demanded more than once in the past was now forgotten; the church tithe was also left unaltered. The Protectorate had lost almost all support outside the army. Its financial situation was critical. No longer believing in the stability of the regime, the City totally refused to grant Cromwell credit. The state debt reached the enormous figure of £1.5 million.

Meanwhile the Protector himself was now 58 years old, and his health was poor. The puffiness of his face was more marked, his gait shuffling, and his hands shook so much that he was barely able to write. Outside his family he was very lonely, and in state affairs relied only on those close to him: his youngest son Henry was his Governor-General in Ireland, his son-in-law Fleetwood was effectively commander of the army, and his relatives set the tone in the State Council. In the summer of 1658 his favourite daughter, Elizabeth, fell seriously ill, and for two weeks Cromwell never left her bedside. Her death was a heavy blow to him. In the middle of August he himself fell ill, and on 3 September, the anniversary of his victory at Dunbar, he died. By then the Exchequer was completely empty. Loans had to be raised to organize the funeral, but this time the creditors were prepared to be generous, and the 'usurper' was buried in the ancient vault of the English kings in Westminster Abbey. However, after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy on 30 January, 1661—the anniversary of the execution of Charles I—Cromwell's body, on the decree of a loyal Parliament, was removed from its grave and, after the barbaric procedure of 'hanging the regicide', the head was severed from the body, the trunk buried in a hole dug beneath the scaffold, and the head spiked and put on display by the Palace of Westminster.

\* \* \*

Cromwell had 'eluded' the vengeance-seeking Royalists not only because his death had preceded their triumph, but above all because his name and achievements already belonged not to them but to history. For more than three hundred years historians have continued to argue over him. What was the determining principle in his moral make-up—extraordinary modesty in his assessment of himself, or consummate skill in concealing his pride? Was he a genius of hypocrisy and mimicry, or a zealous believer in his mission to carry through 'God's cause' of Puritanism? Was he ambitiously cunning, taking a circuitous route to an *already set* purpose, or a pragmatic politician able to tackle only the immediate problem? Finally, was he a revolutionary or the stifler of revolution? Two factors would seem to prevent a clear answer. Firstly, the anachronisms to be found on every side: the words and actions of Cromwell are viewed through the prism of rationalism and 'common sense', whereas one must seek to understand them within the context of the mentality of a Puritan country squire. Secondly, the mixing of the subjective and the objective in the course of the analysis.

As a Puritan who saw history solely as the manifestation of the divine plan, and human actions only as service or opposition to this plan, Cromwell could not but view his victories on the battlefield as the most convincing evidence of his own 'favour' in God's eyes, and of the 'holiness' of the cause in the name of which he had raised his sword. Given such conviction, he could not but identify his own socially conditioned view of the order of things with the 'divine' plan for the ordering of the world, and his own choice of means with 'divine will'. The more sincere the 'self-depreciation' of those 'chosen' to achieve the purpose, the more the 'instrumental' nature of human activity in relation to divine providence is emphasized. It happened, Cromwell said later, recalling the civil war, that it pleased God to gather a company of poor and despised men who knew nothing of the art of war—more, without any natural disposition to it, and the Lord blessed them and assisted them in all their undertakings. In the light of such a doctrine, Cromwell was undoubtedly sincere when he said: 'I am a poor weak creature...; yet accepted to serve the Lord and His people.'<sup>107</sup> He was sincere because, according to Puritan belief, self-depreciation before all-powerful providence, in combination with success of af-

fairs undertaken in its name, was the most convincing manner of exalting what was done in this world, since there could then be no doubt that the hand of the 'poor, weak' Cromwell was guided by 'the will of God'. Wholly convinced of his calling to accomplish the divine plan, Cromwell could not but conclude that his views—in fact class conditioned—of the nature of 'civil' and 'spiritual' freedom were also 'pleasing to God', otherwise he would not have won such brilliant victories. As for the political means used to achieve them, Cromwell displayed a marked tendency to experimentation as to political form, inclining first to a traditional monarchy (if Charles I had proved 'conciliatory'), then to preserving the 'rump' Parliament, and finally to a Parliament of the 'saints', before concluding the experiment of the Protectorate with the design of elevating himself and his line to the throne. It is clear that here we have not mere 'ambition' in the modern sense of the term, but rather sober calculation as to which of these political forms came closer to his conception of a political system able to defend the interests of his class. Cromwell's manifest shift to the right, particularly following the dissolution of the Parliament of the 'saints', clearly reveals *that objective pattern common to all bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries* which was indicated by Engels: the inevitable differentiation and separation of the positions of the different social forces in the revolutionary camp once they have achieved victory. In other words, in the course of the revolution there occurs a gradual *clarification of the slogan-concepts inspiring the social forces which have risen to storm* the old order. For example, the concept 'freedom'—sufficient in this generalized form to bring the forces of revolution into action—assumed such differentiated meanings following the victory of the revolution that what was termed 'freedom' by some appeared as 'oppression' to others.

There is little surprising in the fact that, as soon as the popular masses in England revealed more clearly their understanding of the term 'freedom', and with it the determination to realize it, they were immediately transformed in the eyes of the 'freedom-loving' Cromwell from 'children of God' and 'saints' into the offspring of Satan. On this question at least, Cromwell proved not only objectively but, we would emphasize, subjectively consistent from start to finish, although his contemporaries, as well as later

historiographers, seemed to have grounds for accusing him of betrayal. They had failed to identify the difference between two periods—the abstract expression of the ideals of the revolution, and the concrete implementation of these ideals. However, the logic of the history of bourgeois revolutions in this era is willing to take Cromwell under its wing: driven by all the human passions, sharing all the illusions of his day, he nonetheless remained from start to finish the embodiment of the interests of those very social forces in the name of which the bourgeois revolutions occurred.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. IV, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1947, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup>Roger Howell, *Cromwell*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1977, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman. Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>Maurice Ashley, *Oliver Cromwell. The Conservative Dictator*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1937, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, 1937, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>14</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup>Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642*. Vol. X (1641-1642), Longman's, Green, and Co., London, 1884, p. 211.

<sup>16</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 191.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>19</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup>Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell. The Lord Protector*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1974, p. 107.

<sup>21</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 216.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 278.

- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 258-259.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 279.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 287, 292.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 299.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 314.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 294.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 290.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 123.
- <sup>35</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 69.
- <sup>36</sup>C.H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England*, Putman, London, 1935, p. 114.
- <sup>37</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 314.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 314-315.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 315.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 316.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 289.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 355.
- <sup>43</sup>C.H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England*, p. 127.
- <sup>44</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 359.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 428-429.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 703.
- <sup>47</sup>C.H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England*, p. 159.
- <sup>48</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 433.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 445.
- <sup>50</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 435.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 471.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 473.
- <sup>53</sup>Roger Howell, *Cromwell*, p. 95.
- <sup>54</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, p. 472.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 492.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 505.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 512.
- <sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 516.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 517.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 518.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 554.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 559.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 560.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 539.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 518.
- <sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 519.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 567.

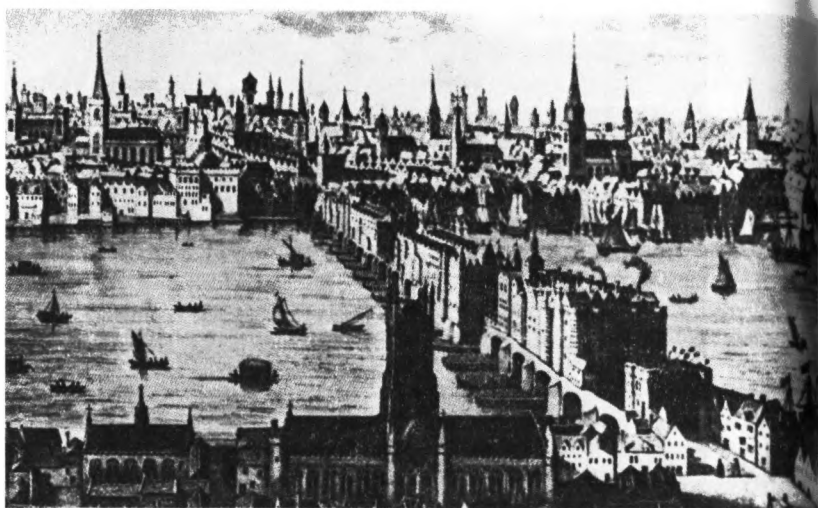
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 569.
- <sup>69</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 575.
- <sup>71</sup>Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell. The Lord Protector*, p. 229.
- <sup>72</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. I, pp. 697-699.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 717.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 736.
- <sup>75</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. II, 1939, p. 11.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 72.
- <sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 756.
- <sup>78</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 104.
- <sup>79</sup>Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell. The Lord Protector*, p. 396.
- <sup>80</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. II, p. 38.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 35.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 126.
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>86</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 115.
- <sup>87</sup>Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann in Hanover, November 29, 1869', Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982, p. 217.
- <sup>88</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. II, p. 270.
- <sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 325.
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 288.
- <sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 324.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 325.
- <sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 643-644.
- <sup>94</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 132.
- <sup>95</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. III, 1945, pp. 61-64.
- <sup>96</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. IV, p. 417.
- <sup>97</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. III, p. 55.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 138.
- <sup>99</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. II, p. 506.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 483.
- <sup>101</sup>Christopher Hill, *God's Englishman...*, p. 228.
- <sup>102</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. III, pp. 435-436.
- <sup>103</sup>Maurice Ashley, *Oliver Cromwell. The Conservative Dictator*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1937, p. 287.
- <sup>104</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. IV, p. 463.
- <sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 501.
- <sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 514.
- <sup>107</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. II, p. 483.





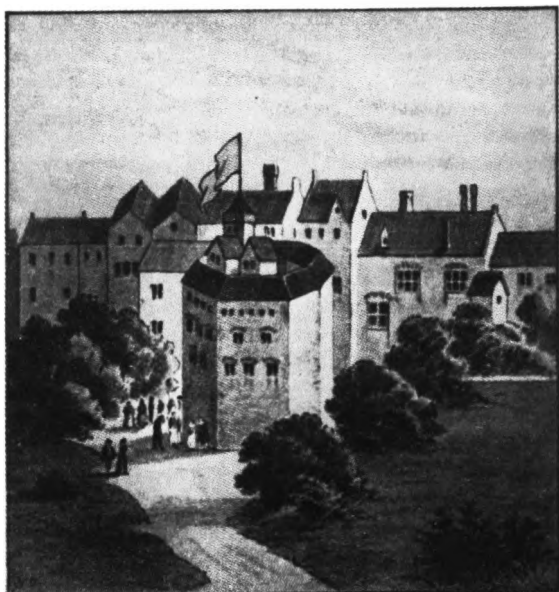
King James I (Stuart), 1566-1625

London Bridge in the reign of James I



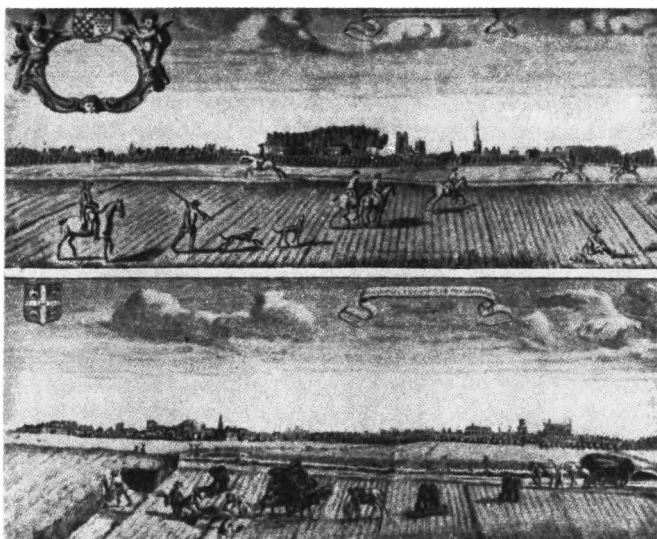
The Strand in London

## Members of the Gunpowder Plot (1605)

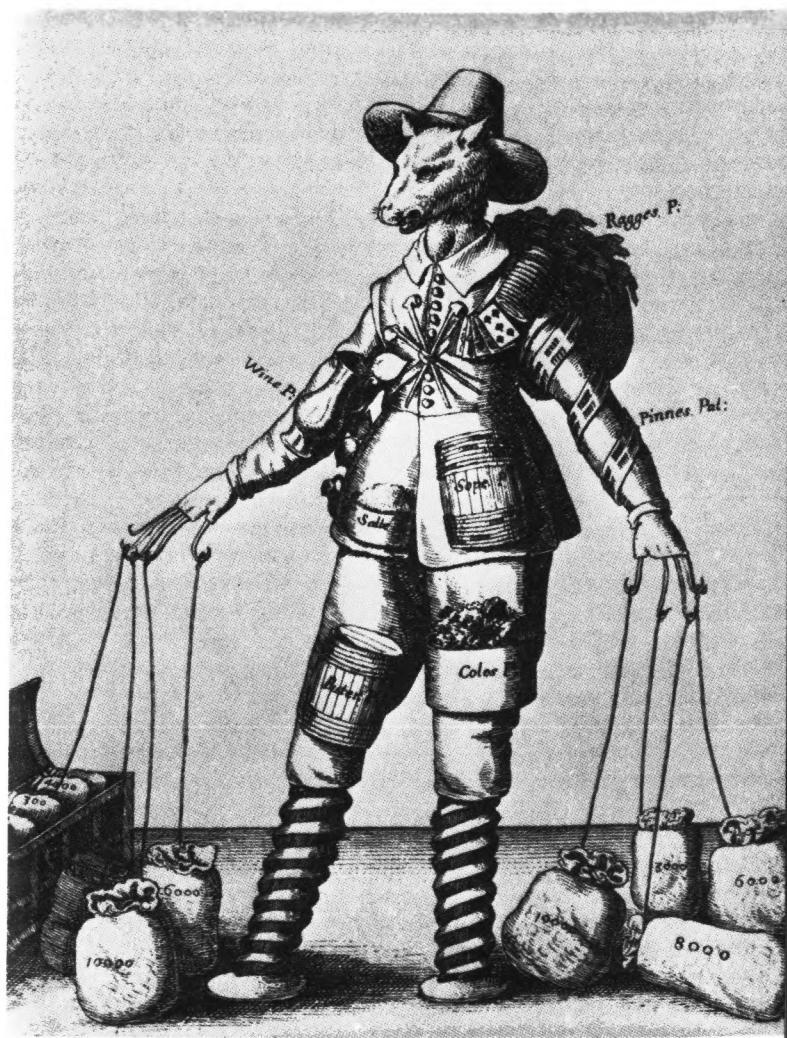


The Globe theatre, built in 1599 and rebuilt in 1613-1614 after the great fire of London

Open fields around Cambridge (1690)



An enclosed farm (1669)

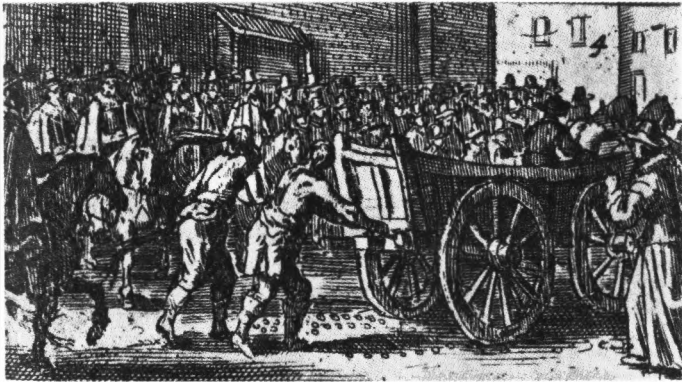


An illustration depicting the owner  
of a monopoly licence fleecing  
the crowd by high prices



King Charles I (Stuart), 1600-1649

Archbishop William Laud at a dinner  
in the Star Chamber. On the dish  
are the ears cut off John Prynne,  
John Bastwick and Henry Burton  
on the order of this court



John Lilburne being flogged on his way  
to the pillory





The execution of Strafford (May, 1641)





Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

John Lilburne (1641)

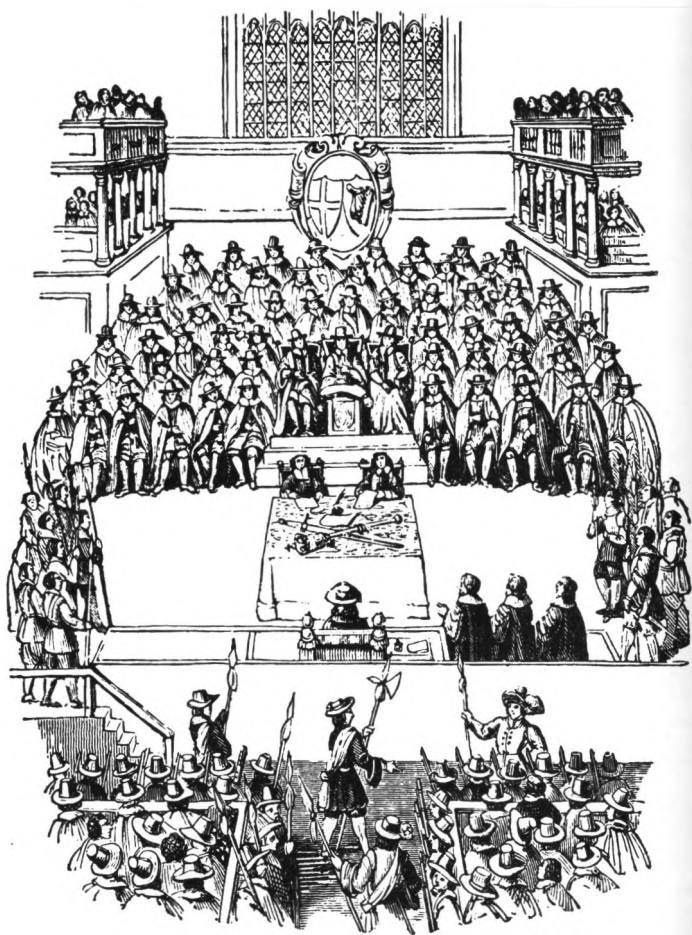


John Lilburne (arrested in 1646 on the orders of the House of Lords)



The church in Putney where the Putney conference was held in the autumn of 1647 (the illustration is of a later date)





The trial of Charles I



A picture of Lilburne after he had been acquitted  
of the charge of treason (October, 1649).  
He is holding a copy of the 'Institution'  
by Edward Coke



William Walwyn. During the restoration  
period he practised medicine  
(without a licence)

# THE Declaration and Standard

Of the Levellers of England;

Delivered in a Speech to his Excellency the Lord Gen. Fairfax, on Friday last at White-Hall, by Mr. Everard, a late Member of the Army, and his Prophecie in reference thereto; shewing what will befall the Nobility and Gentry of this Nation, by their submitting to community; With their invitation and promise unto the people, and their proceedings in *Windfor Park*, *Orlins Park*, and severall other places; also, the Examination and correction of the said Mr. Everard before his Excellency, the manner of his deportment with his Haron, and his severall speeches and expressions, when he was commanded to put it off. Together with a List of the severall Regiments of Horse and Foot that have cast Lots to go for Ireland.



Imprinted at London, for G. Lawrence. April 22. 1649.

Digger William Everard appearing  
before General Fairfax in London

## THE 'FREE-BORN' JOHN LILBURNE

As heroes in one and the same historical drama—the English revolution of the 17th century—John Lilburne and Oliver Cromwell had not a little in common as regards their initial position in the struggle. By birth they both belonged to the provincial gentry, were brought up in Puritan families, and from early childhood absorbed the religious convictions and moral precepts of home-grown interpreters of the Geneva Bible. (The Geneva Bible was published in pocketable editions, so that men could study it in the privacy of their homes, or could produce it in a church or an ale-house to knock down an argument with a text).<sup>1</sup> Both were marked by a rather fiery temperament, although this displayed itself differently, and inexhaustible energy. Both also felt an active dislike for the arbitrary actions and violence of the ruling powers. Finally, neither advanced very far in the education of the day.

How different, however, were the destinies of these two 'warriors among the bold' of the revolution! This was less because of differences in the degree and nature of their talents, but mainly because of fundamental differences in the interests of those social forces in whose name they acted. Consequently they played different roles in a truly heroic decade in the history of the English nation.

It was Cromwell who first raised, at the very beginning of the Long Parliament, the question of releasing Lilburne from prison, where he had been sent by Charles I for distributing Puritan literature. On Cromwell's recommendation, Lilburne was made a lieutenant-colonel in the army



of the Eastern Association. The 'spirit of freedom' which ruled Cromwell in those years seemed to Lilburne so close to his own that, as he himself admitted later, he considered Cromwell '...my then most dear friend'.<sup>2</sup> At the battle of Marston Moor (1644), they fought side by side on the left flank of the parliamentary troops. The dragoons under the command of Lilburne cleared a path under enemy fire for Cromwell to lead a cavalry attack. After the end of the first civil war, however, they moved further and further apart. How 'dangerous' a state criminal did Lilburne seem to Cromwell (after attaining supreme power during the Republic, and particularly during the Protectorate) if he subjected him to harsh persecution, imprisoned him, obliged him to leave his native land and live abroad until his spirit was broken and he died. Yet nonetheless the name of John Lilburne, revolutionary and martyr, belongs as much to the history of the English revolution as the name of his persecutor, Oliver Cromwell, who triumphed on the ashes of the revolution. More, one might say that his name proved nobler and more enduring, since the ideas for which Lilburne was willing to go to the scaffold survived centuries after Cromwell, calling the noble hearts and minds of his people to struggle. Furthermore, Lilburne's political ideals have become part of not only English but world political thought.

The complexity of the web of social forces which carried through the English revolution of the 17th century revealed itself not only in profound differences in the ultimate aims pursued by these forces, but also in the diversity of the *types of revolutionary* of that period. We have chosen to look more closely at those who most adequately conveyed the hopes of a particular social group fighting on the revolutionary side, and who, no less remarkably, embodied the unique individuality of human character as illuminated by history. Their lives illustrate, albeit in different ways, the heroic and the tragic aspects of this battle in all their dramatic integrity.

It is indeed men who make history. Our understanding of *how* they create it in various historical (and in particular revolutionary) periods is conveyed to us by the words and deeds of those whose role in the given period most vividly reveals what it is, in purely human terms, to be an *actor on the stage of history*.

## ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION

John Lilburne was born in 1615 in Sunderland, near Newcastle. Historians seek to determine John Lilburne's date of birth not using parish records but the occasional references by Lilburne himself to his age at the time of the events he is describing. The vagueness of these indications enables some researchers to conclude that he was born in 1614 in Greenwich, others—Sunderland, 1615. (For a more detailed examination of this question, see: *Free-Born John. A Biography of John Lilburne* by Pauline Gregg, George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., London, 1961, pp. 11-32). Although, in the language of the day, he was undoubtedly of noble ancestry, nonetheless it must be remembered that this refers, firstly, to the nature of the revenue and, secondly, to a nobility which did not scorn a revenue acquired by trade and industry. Richard, his father, was a descendent of the Lilburne family, which for several centuries had been connected with the northern counties of Durham and Northumberland, and he was lord of the relatively small manor of Thickey Punchardon, Durham. The manor of Thickey Punchardon 'consisted of 200 acres of arable land, 100 acres of meadow, and 200 acres of pasture, with two messuages. Two messuages only would suggest a certain measure of enclosure and depopulation, or perhaps merely of depopulation in the bad years at the end of the previous century'.<sup>3</sup> Margaret, his mother, was the daughter of Thomas Hixon, Keeper of the Standing Wardrobe at the royal palace in Greenwich. This combination of the local traditions and practices dominant in the far north of the country, and the mores of the court near the capital was, as we shall see, later to have an effect on Lilburne's life.

Although the social structure of the northern counties was still largely untouched by the early capitalist order, many of the local gentry were nonetheless involved in entrepreneurial and trading activity. Among this 'new aristocracy' there were close relatives of John Lilburne. They had grown rich from the leasing of coal mines and transport of coal by sea to be sold in the south, primarily in London. In the 1630's, Sir Thomas Lilburne was one of the most well-known and influential entrepreneurs and

traders in Newcastle. Richard Lilburne's brother, George, occupied a similar position in Sunderland. Judging by the fact that the area of meadow and pasture on the estates of Lilburne's father exceeded the cultivated land, it is not difficult to conclude that he not only grew wheat, but also bred cattle (or produced hay) for sale.

Perhaps it was because he had connections in the south of the country that Richard Lilburne decided to send the fourteen-year old John, as the younger son and according to the custom of the 'new aristocracy', to be a trade apprentice not in nearby Newcastle, but to the London wholesale wool merchant, Thomas Hewson. This was in 1629. John's elder brother, Robert, fought under Fairfax and Cromwell during the civil war as a cavalry colonel. How much school-learning the young Lilburne had acquired by this time remains unclear. We know only that his studies ended when he left the Royal grammar school in Sutherland. According to his own statements, he knew Latin and a little Greek, and therefore had read the classics in text-book form. To judge by his numerous pamphlets, he not only possessed an undoubted talent for dramatizing events in his own life and presenting them as illustrations of wider, national problems, but his tendency to exaltation, his imagery and wide use of both colloquial language and familiar Latin phrases made him undoubtedly an effective pamphleteer. As for his knowledge of basic English common and constitutional law and elements of the doctrinaire history of the Reformation, Lilburne learned these later thanks to intensive reading, for which the royal authorities and then the Long Parliament provided him with sufficient time, incarcerating him for many years in prison (under Charles I he was in Fleet prison from the end of 1638 to the end of 1640). According to his own account, he had the opportunity for self-education even while he was a trade apprentice (no doubt in a more privileged position than the apprenticed sons of craftsmen). 'I had spare time enough. I continually spent it in reading the Bible, the Book of Martyrs, Luther's, Calvin's, Beza's, Cartwright's, Perkin's... With multitude of other such like books, that I had bought with my own money'.<sup>4</sup> Trade apprentices such as Lilburne never forgot their 'noble' origins and recalled them at every possible opportunity. John Lilburne, for example, wrote: 'I am the son of a gentleman and my friends are of rank and quality in the

country where they live'.<sup>5</sup> And again: 'I am the second son of a gentleman ... descended of an ancient and worshipful family...'<sup>6</sup> Trained from childhood to absorb Puritan preaching, John found himself at the vortex of the Puritan passions which were spreading among broad sections of the London population, including among the apprentices. Never before had the Puritan preachers had such a receptive audience. Puritan pamphlets (some printed abroad and smuggled into England) were bought up instantly. We shall cite just two examples: Bayly's 'The Practice of Pietie' was issued 36 times between 1612 and 1636. Dent's 'The Plaine Man's Path-way to Heaven' was issued 25 times between 1601 and 1640. These were the first years of Charles I's government without Parliament, when the Anglican Church was headed by Archbishop Laud, who had decided on draconian methods to root out the Puritan 'schism' and establish uniformity and unanimity of belief.

Is it surprising, therefore, that Lilburne, fiery by temperament, not only read the works of Puritan preachers, but also wished to play an active part in spreading them on returning to England? He was arrested at the end of 1637 on the charge of printing in Holland (where he had gone at the beginning of the same year on the pretext of seeking employment, as his master, Thomas Hewson, had closed his business) and sending over to England several thousand copies of the essay 'Letany' by Doctor Bastwick, which contained attacks on the episcopacy. The essence of the essay is well conveyed by a prayer contained in it: '...from plague, pestilence and famine, from Bishops, Priests and Deacons, good Lord, deliver us'.<sup>7</sup>

To illustrate the resolute spirit of this young Puritan, and his skill under questioning, indicating a more mature champion of the cause, we shall cite an extract from records of a 'dialogue' between a clerk of the royal attorney and Lilburne:

- Where were you rose there? (i.e. in Holland)
- At Rotterdam.
- And from thence you went to Amsterdam?
- Yes.
- What books did you see in Holland?
- Great store of books.
- I know that, but I ask you, if you did see Dr. Bastwick's ... a book called *Letany*.

— Yes, I saw them there and if you please to go there you may buy an hundred of them at the booksellers.

— Who printed all those books?

— I do not know.

— But did you not send over some of the books?

— I sent not any of them over.<sup>8</sup>

The sentence of the Star Chamber was harsh. He was to be 'smartly whipt from the Fleet to Westminster' (at the time he was being held in the Fleet). 'Having stripped from the waist upwards, he was tied to the end of the cart, and at every second or third step received a lash from a whip made from two or three cords tied full of knots.' They moved slowly, and the lash was raised rhythmically to come down on the bare back of Lilburne, which was soon covered with blood. The sun blazed down on his bare head, and sweat and dust blinded his eyes. Many Londoners watching the sentence executed, were weeping, others sympathized and followed the cart. Between the Fleet and the pillory at Westminster Hall Gate, Lilburne was lashed 500 times. After this he had to stand for two hours in the sun, motionless at the pillory, to which he was fastened by a stock round the neck. When, after his public flogging, Lilburne was ordered to recant his beliefs, he exclaimed: 'Unless the Bishops by the law of the land, and the word of God, will show me my offence, I will never submit, nor recant, in the least, while breath is in my body.'<sup>9</sup> Mastering the dreadful pain, Lilburne found the strength to display further courage, and began to address the crowd, describing the reasons for his arrest, and then started to speak out against the bishops—'spawn of the devil'. When the guards executing the sentence forced him with blows to be silent, he unexpectedly drew from his trouser pocket a bundle of Puritan pamphlets and threw them into the crowd. The courageous conduct of this young martyr for 'the true faith' amazed those present, and from that day he was known in London as 'Free-Born John'.

Shortly after returning to prison, Lilburne faced another sentence by the Star Chamber: in punishment for his 'outrageous' behaviour at the pillory, he was to be placed in the 'hold' of Fleet prison with double chains on his feet and hands. Weak and unable to help himself, he was placed in the care of an old woman, that is, he

was left to his fate (perhaps in the hope that, by virtue of his helplessness, he would be killed by one of the prisoners sent to him). Fortunately neither the one or the other occurred in the event. His youth came to his aid and, as he himself explained this miracle, the noble spirit of martyrdom had been granted to him by 'the great goodness of the Almighty'. Lilburne survived. More, in these inhuman conditions, in total and rigorous isolation, he managed—no one knows how—to obtain writing materials, write his own first pamphlets and get them out of prison, where they were quickly published by his friends. The first pamphlet was written before the public flogging and was entitled 'Christian Mans Triall' (12 March, 1638), followed by 'A Worke of the Beast' (1638). In them he described his interrogation, his public flogging, and the speech he had delivered to the crowd. In August a third pamphlet came out of the prison, entitled 'Come out of her My People', in which he passionately argued the need for the Puritans to separate from the church of papist prelates (that is, the established Anglican Church). This pamphlet, published in Amsterdam, contained a pledge to which Lilburne, at the price of heavy psychological and physical suffering, remained faithful to the end: 'I will, come life, come death; speake my minde freely and courageously'.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the dreadful conditions of Lilburne's imprisonment continued. In a petition addressed to the Privy Council he complained that he was losing his sight, and that he was ill. He was troubled by nightmares, he feared that he would be murdered in the dark on the orders of the Archbishop. He did not know whether his petition would be delivered, but in the hope that it would be published he included in it an appeal to the people, 'Poore Mans Cry', in which he asked them to come daily to the prison to ask after him, so that he could not be murdered 'in a hole and corner'.<sup>11</sup> Lilburne was in solitary confinement for four months, and during all that time he was in chains, which caused him unbearable pain at the slightest movement of his arms or legs. However, even after the chains had been removed, his conditions did not improve to any significant degree, the main reason being his refusal to connive with the corruption which reigned in the prisons of the period. The prison warders received no state pay for their 'labours', and

therefore had to support themselves by extortion from the prisoners. For each 'service' (delivering things or food, permitting visits, walks, etc.), the warders had to be paid quite large amounts of money. Lilburne's indignation at this system put the warders against him. At the beginning of 1639, he was so weak that he was unable to move without help. In May of that same year, he appealed to the London apprentices to request the Lord Mayor to transfer him to another prison where he would feel safer. Yet even in these conditions, his Puritan exaltation did not leave him, 'for I have a soldier's heart in my innocent breast',<sup>12</sup> as he told his colleagues and sympathizers. The apprentices' revolt against Archbishop Laud on Trinity Sunday is seen as linked to the spreading of Lilburne's pamphlet. Lilburne remained in these conditions right up to the beginning of the revolution—until the convening of the Long Parliament in 1640. That year marked his twenty-fifth birthday.

### **'GOD'S SOLDIER' WAGES BATTLE WITH THE KING**

The beginning of the English revolution marked a new page in the biography of John Lilburne. On 3 November, 1640, the Long Parliament met for its first session, and on 9 November, as we already know, member of Parliament Oliver Cromwell, a country gentleman, rose from his seat to pronounce what was, in effect, his first public speech, and in which he drew the attention of the House to the fate of one of the victims of arbitrary royal action—the imprisoned John Lilburne. On 13 November, Lilburne was released. On 4 May, 1641, the House of Commons adopted a resolution in which the very fact of imprisoning John Lilburne was declared 'illegal ... bloody, wicked, cruel, barbarous and tyrannical',<sup>13</sup> and he was recognized as having the right to claim material compensation, a right, however, which was never realized. He was assisted by his prosperous Uncle George, who had opened a brewery in London and who entrusted the management to John. It was during this period that Lilburne married Elizabeth Dewell, who proved to be a woman of exceptional courage, a deeply

devoted ally of her husband to the end. At the beginning of the civil war, Lilburne, with the rank of captain, joined the infantry, composed mainly of London apprentices, and fought at Edgehill and Brentford. The courage of individual units, however, could not compensate for the reluctance of the Presbyterian generals to win victory. In a battle waged on 12 November, 1642, John was captured by the Cavaliers and taken to Oxford, which the King had now made his headquarters. He risked the death penalty for 'treason' against the King, a fate from which he was quite literally saved by his wife. Pregnant with their first child, she burst into the House of Commons to beg them to save her husband, and the impression created by her genuine distress was so great that the House immediately adopted a resolution threatening the Royalists with 'retribution' should they carry the sentence into effect. This threat had a very real basis, as Parliament held quite a few captured Royalists. With this document Elizabeth, overcoming every obstacle in her way, reached Oxford, and thereby saved the life not only of John, but also of other captured 'Roundheads'. As the result of an exchange of prisoners, John was freed, and the city of London greeted him as a hero. He was offered a civilian post which would have secured him a respectable income and a peaceful life, but he would not have been Lilburne if he had agreed, and he unhesitatingly rejected the offer. While the civil war continued, his place was on the battlefield. Fate again brought him and Cromwell together, and this time directly. Lilburne's Independent views, which prevented him from taking the oath of allegiance to the Covenant (that is, the obligation which the Long Parliament had assumed, under pressure from the Scots, to introduce the Presbyterian church order, which involved imposed uniformity), won complete understanding and support from Cromwell. It will be remembered that Cromwell put the desire to 'fight for Parliament' above all other considerations in recruiting his troops. Thanks to Cromwell's representations, Lilburne was given the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Earl of Manchester's army. At the battle of Marston Moor, Lilburne fought side by side with Cromwell. When, not long afterwards, Lilburne availed himself of the opportunity, on his own initiative, to force the royalist garrison of Tickhill Castle to surren-



der, himself not losing a single man, the Earl of Manchester raged at him and threatened to hang him for insubordination. He was outraged not only by Independent views, but also by Independent military tactics, and in particular as illustrated by Lilburne who was, it seemed, indeed seeking victory. Later, when Cromwell brought accusations against Manchester in Parliament, Lilburne was an invaluable witness. Thus ended Lilburne's military career. Although he was offered a high-ranking position of command in the New Model Army, he refused, as yet again the same oath of allegiance to the Covenant was a necessary precondition. At the end of April, 1645, on the eve of the battle of Naseby, Lilburne handed over his dragoons to Colonel Okeley, declaring that he would 'dig for carrots and turnips before he would fight to set up a power to make himself a slave'.<sup>14</sup> In this instance Lilburne displayed far more consistency than Cromwell, who gave his formal consent to this precondition. However, Lilburne's return to 'civilian life' did not mean a return to a peaceful one. In fact it was merely a change of weapons, and the sword was replaced with the word. Moreover, he now faced, in a new guise, an opponent blocking the path to freedom and the triumph of justice as Lilburne understood it. Alongside the conservative Presbyterians, with whom Lilburne was well-acquainted through his clash with the Earl of Manchester, there were also the 'silken Independents' led by Cromwell. However, Lilburne was no longer alone. He was surrounded by supporters, known as Levellers.

Following the parliamentary victory in the first civil war, the main persecutors of the Levellers, who were leading the struggle to further democratize the content of the revolution, was, as we know, the Presbyterian majority in Parliament. The Long Parliament, the supreme legislative and executive organ in the country, revealed itself openly as the vehicle of the interests of *those social strata for whom the revolution was, to all intents and purposes, complete*. The landowners, whose estates were now freed from the burden of the knightly holding, the merchant oligarchy in the City, parliamentary creditors who had grown wealthy on interest, suppliers to the parliamentary army who had waxed prosperous thanks to the war, speculators who took part in plundering confiscated royalist property—all these grouped around the Long Parliament

in its opposition to the Leveller demand for political, legal and church reforms.

### **THE DEFENDER OF THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF 'FREE-BORN' ENGLISHMEN**

We have already had occasion to see that, during the period in which Charles I ruled without Parliament, Lilburne saw his chief enemies within the Anglican Church. As regards the secular authorities, he called for obedience to them in accord with Calvin's teaching. In the pamphlet 'Come out of her My People', referred to earlier, Lilburne wrote: '...yet if it were the meanest officer in the kingdom that took me, that were made an officer by virtue of the King's authority and power, I would submit unto him ... for I know the King's authority is from God... For I do hold it unlawful for any of God's people in their greatest oppression by the magistrate to rebel or to take up any temporal arms against them...' <sup>15</sup> In the course of the civil war he had to revise that opinion. Now the route to freedom was blocked by the Presbyterian majority in Parliament, who viewed any manifestation of free-thinking in religious matters with the same hostility as they viewed it in matters of political organization. In such a situation, the courageous struggle waged by Lilburne against the conservatism and royalism of the Presbyterian majority was a struggle to further democratize the content of the revolution. His transition from a position of obedience to the secular authority to a position of resistance to and open rejection of it is explained primarily, of course, by the experience of the civil war, but not only by this. This time the personification of supreme secular power was not God's anointed, the king, but parliament—an institution not divine but human. Therefore, what is instituted by men may be judged by men. As the secular and church authorities were still not separated, this meant that the opponents of the Presbyterians inevitably faced the punitive hand of Parliament.

The paradox in this situation—Lilburne was arrested directly as a result of a report by Presbyterian divines—lay in the fact that Prynne and Bastwick, who informed against him, had themselves been victims of Laud's policy

of church uniformity at any price during the reign of Charles I (both lost their ears, cut off during their public punishment in 1637). Now it was they who were pursuing the policy of uniformity at any price, only on the basis of Presbyterianism. As a result, those who, the day before, had been Lilburne's patrons and instructors in the theology and practice of Puritanism now became his merciless persecutors.

In his pamphlet 'Independency Examined, Unmask'd, Refuted' (1644), Prynne, obviously in order to frighten the parliamentary majority, warned that religious independence was the first step towards the legalization of anarchy. Lilburne was known among the Presbyterians to be hostile to any form of coercion in religious matters, and to enjoy wide popularity for this reason among the London populace. It was only in the context of freedom of conscience and the *voluntary* association of believers that different kinds of radical sects could emerge and function, and although they were all Christian, each had its own interpretation and its own form of religious service. In the well-known pamphlet 'Gangraena', Thomas Edwards, 'hammer of the sectaries', writes: 'There is one John Lilburne, an Arch-Sectary, the great darling of the Sectaries, highly extolled and magnified by them in many pamphlets'.<sup>16</sup> The arrows fired by Prynne against the Independents could not, of course, but strike Lilburne as well. It was not his character to remain silent. While still serving in the army—in January, 1645—he published his reply under the title 'A Copie of a Letter to Mr. William Prinne' in which he wrote: '...being desirous to try a fall with you, though one of your friends not long since told me, there was as great disproportion betwixt you and me ... as there is betwixt a tall Cedar and a little shrub: unto which I replied, goe you and tell the tall Cedar, the little Shrub will have about with him...'<sup>17</sup> In this short but amazingly lucid pamphlet, everything came together: the personal quarrel between Lilburne and the Presbyterian Earl of Manchester and Colonel King, the memory of his sufferings under Charles I and, finally, his parlous material position.

The trade in which he had been trained—the cloth trade—proved inaccessible, as Parliament had granted the monopoly to the Company of Merchant Adventurers in return for loans and subsidies.

Although, during its early sessions, Parliament adopted a resolution on paying Lilburne compensation for the losses he had suffered, he never received this compensation. Even Cromwell's appeal to Parliament to pay the £880 outstanding to Lilburne for his service in the army went unheeded. On the other hand, the generosity of Parliament to those of its own circle is astounding. Pym and his posterity were granted landed estates with an annual revenue of £10 thousand, while the descendents of John Hampden were given estates with an annual value of £5 thousand, although he was known to be the richest man in the House of Commons. Nonetheless, the 'Letter to Mr. William Prinne' still did not contain any direct attacks on Parliament; its main target was Presbyterian intolerance and coercion in matters of conscience.

'No Parliament, Councell, Synod, Emperor, King, nor Majistrate hath any spiritual authority, or jurisdiction over this Kingdom, or the Subjects thereof. For, Sir, let me tell you, it is the incommunicable Prerogative of Jesus Christ alone to be King of his Saints, and Law-giver to his Church and people, and to raigne in the soules and consciences of His chosen ones.'<sup>18</sup> From this it followed that to persecute those who held different opinions in matters of conscience, whether that persecution came from Laud or Prynne, was the work of anti-Christ.

As Lilburne expected, Prynne immediately went to Parliament to complain, demanding retribution for the attacks on the covenant. However, as Lilburne, twice summoned before the Committee of Examination for questioning, remained inflexible, and still at large, Prynne's colleagues reported to Lenthall, the speaker of the House of Commons, that Lilburne was spreading rumours that Lenthall and his brother had sent £60 thousand to the King at Oxford (later even Gardiner, a historian very moderate in his conclusions, did not consider this 'unbelievable'). This time all the leading Presbyterians in the House of Commons, including Lilburne's personal enemies (and, of course, King and Manchester), and also Dr. Bastwick, Lilburne's former patron and instructor in theology, decided to make use of this slander against Lilburne to be rid of him. Lilburne was immediately arrested, and although he demanded that the charges be officially presented, and that they be heard in court according to the existing legislation, he was thrown into Newgate prison.

Thus, in 1645, began a new stage not only in the history of the revolution, but also in the life of Lilburne. The victory of Parliament in the first civil war demanded that an answer be given to a question of crucial significance, namely the future political system in the country now that it had rid itself of the monarchy. This question clearly revealed not merely the degree of heterogeneity of the social forces in the revolutionary camp, but also the now manifest incompatibility of the ideas and interests in the name of which these different social forces had fought during the war. The dominance of the Presbyterians in Parliament indicated the desire of the *upper echelons* of the propertied classes in the town and the countryside to restrict the revolution to replacing royal power with their own. At the same time, the spread of Independent sympathies in the army indicated not only the growing political influence of Cromwell — the army's hero of the past and, as it was to prove, deceptive hope for the future — but also revealed division within the army itself. The rank-and-file and junior officers, unlike Cromwell and the senior officers, were concerned not only about the question of guaranteed tolerance, but also about something even more important: the question of what the parliamentary victory had done to change the position of the craftsman in the town and the peasant in the countryside. The answer to these questions also concerned the so-termed civilian Levellers, who expressed primarily the interests of the London populace, among whom the movement had initially emerged. John Lilburne had become the most popular champion of Leveller principles. Although, within the Leveller movement, such men as William Walwyn and Richard Overton were undoubtedly more gifted writers, nonetheless by the boldness of his attacks on the powers-that-be, by his disdain for the threats against him and, in general, for his own fate, by his ability to turn his own imprisonment into a drama of 'the English people', and by exposing, on the basis of his own experience, the essence of the struggle being waged, Lilburne won not only the warm sympathy of the London apprentices, but became the mouthpiece, as it were, of the whole democratic wing of the revolution represented in the Leveller movement. Thus Lilburne was the first of those who had played any prominent role in the revolution to dare to reveal publicly the essence of the matter. From at least the summer of

1645 he turned all his skill as a tribune and guardian of popular freedom against the parliamentary politicians. On 25 July there appeared his illegally published pamphlet entitled 'The Copy of a Letter from Colonel John Lilburne to a Friend'. In this pamphlet the members of Parliament appear not only as the persecutors of those who hold religious convictions different from their own, but, having aroused the people to fight in the name of a freedom which has proved to be only a new tyranny, themselves live in luxury while thousands and thousands of those who lost all they possessed in the service of Parliament are left without so much as a crust of bread. Many poor widows and orphaned children who lost the bread-winner in the war are crying: 'Bread, bread!' but their cries do not reach the new rulers. The powerful of this world are devouring the small. For the first time in his 'pamphlet war' against those who were stifling freedom, Lilburne opened the eyes of his readers to the existing social and property inequality.

In August, 1645, when Lilburne was in Newgate prison, a petition was put before Parliament signed by two or three thousand Londoners and demanding that he be released and paid the promised compensation and army arrears. Meanwhile Prynne, continuing the persecution of Lilburne, described the danger he presented in the following terms: 'The Ignorant Vulgar, who adore him as the onely Oracle of truth';<sup>19</sup> his writings 'kindled a publike dangerous flame, disaffected divers of his Seditious Faction, and set their tongues nay hearts against the Parliament. Lilburne's Seditious Faction sat brewing mischief and ripening publike mutinies... Many of these took place at the Windmill Tavern, where Lilburne was a great stickler...' <sup>20</sup> Another of Lilburne's persecutors, the Presbyterian Bastwick, on the pretext of concern for piety, also reported to the authorities: 'The crowds and multitudes that run after him ... look upon him as their Champion, applauding all his actions ... the poore people were all his deluded by his false information'.<sup>21</sup>

These 'exposures' by the learned and the guardians of order very probably did not reach the London populace, and if they did, they were rejected with contempt. The crowds continued to follow their favourite along the whole of his route from prison to the doors of Parliament when

he was summoned for another questioning; they besieged the House of Commons demanding his release.

One of Lilburne's most significant compositions written while he was in Newgate prison was the pamphlet 'England's Birth-right Justified Against All Usurpations Whether Regal or Parliamentary'. However, before looking at the content, several important factors should be considered. As the struggle against the uniformity imposed by the Presbyterians developed into a struggle against 'the new tyranny' – the politics of the Presbyterian Parliament in general – so the sources from which Lilburne drew the arguments to support his attacks also changed. Alongside quotations from the bible, there appeared more frequent references to Magna Carta (moreover, interpreted very freely), to the Book of Declarations (which contained what could be described as 'the slogans of Parliament' during its battle against the King), to 'The Institutes' by Sir Edward Coke, one of the most prominent lawyers of the first half of the 17th century and, finally, to 'The Mirror of Justices', a medieval compilation whose content was far removed from reality, and idealized the social organization of England before the Normans. It was very probably from this last work that Lilburne, like many other contemporaries, took his arguments on the so-called 'Norman yoke'. The essence of this argument was that the 'age-old freedom' of the Anglo-Saxons, embodied in the sovereignty of the popular assembly (the 'Hundred'), was destroyed by the Norman conquerors. It was they who had introduced all those forms of oppression of free-born Englishmen against which the Levellers, and above all Lilburne, were raising their voice. This new conceptual basis or arsenal of arguments can be clearly seen in the pamphlet 'England's Birth-right Justified...', which Lilburne wrote while in Newgate prison, and which was immediately printed by an illegal printing-press.

Typically, in the preamble, in which he addresses all the 'free-born' people of England, Lilburne declares that those who fought for Parliament now find themselves in a worse position than before. Their lives, property and precious time have been sacrificed in vain. 'Neither Petitions can be easily accepted, justice truly administered, the Presses equally opened, the cries of the poor heard, the teares of the oppressed considered, the sighes of the prisoners regarded, the miseries of the widow and Father-

less pittyed, nor scarcely any that are in distresse relieved.' Insofar as Parliament has turned its back on all of these, the sole defence of the 'free-born' is the law. Each should know the law which defends him against arbitrary action and encroachments. Therefore, Lilburne emphasizes, '...all the binding Lawes in England should be in English ... that so every Free-man may reade it as well as Lawyers ... who juggle, and put false glosses upon the Law ... for their own ends.'<sup>22</sup>

While insisting on an *exclusively legal* settlement of the position of the individual in society, Lilburne nonetheless still does not bring into question in his pamphlet the justice of the law as such. The fact that Lilburne saw in the observance of legal norms and their procedural aspect the most reliable defence of freedom indicated, if only by implication, even on the eve of the formation of the Leveller party, the socio-proprietary boundaries in the interpretation of freedom: the inviolability of the freedom of the individual was simply the inviolability of property in other words. 'Yea,' wrote Lilburne, 'take away the declared, unrepealed law, and then where is meum and tuum, and liberty and property?'<sup>23</sup> Although there can be no doubt that Lilburne drew his followers above all from among the London populace, the apprentices and shop boys, the lower limit of the freedom remaining to them virtually excluded from the 'free-born' all those who were without that minimum of property which enabled its possessor to freely express his will. It should be pointed out that in a pamphlet by William Walwyn, another Leveller ideologist, which appeared shortly after Lilburne's and which was entitled 'England's Lamentable Slaverie', the boundary on freedom included all the inhabitants of the country, independently of their property position. 'That liberty and privilege which you claim is as due to you as the very air you breathe.'<sup>24</sup> There was only one area where Lilburne's demands impinged upon the existing property relations — his demand for the abolition of the church tithe, which he saw as the main support of popery in the country, while the Ordinance issued by Parliament in 1645 required that it be strictly observed and paid. This, in Lilburne's opinion, contradicted earlier promises to abolish it. Although the tithe had, for the most part, long since (following the Reformation) become part of the revenue of secular landowners (the so-called impropiators), that is, had become



a form of secular property, nonetheless Lilburne tirelessly demanded its abolition, since it was unjust in the civil sense. Parliament had turned not only the word of God, but also the woolen trade into a monopoly of those wearing '...black and rough garments' by placing it in the hands of the Merchant Adventurers' Company, which was 'contrary to the law of Nature, the Law of Nations'.<sup>25</sup> Lilburne also attacked the monopoly of printing, given to companies of book-traders. Finally, Lilburne demanded : 1) that excise, which was most oppressive on the poor, be replaced with traditional 'subsidies', that is, by a tax which was assessed according to the property status of the taxpayer; and 2) annual parliamentary elections, so that the 'free-born' people of England should have the opportunity to check once a year the conduct of those whom they had elected. 'Oh Englishmen! Where are your Freedoms? And what is become of your Liberties and Priviledges that you have been fighting for all this while, to the large expence of your Bloods and Estates, which was hoped would have Procured your liberties and freedoms? But rather, as some great ones Order it, ties you faster in bondage and slavery, than before; therefore look about you betimes, before it is too late, and give not occasion to your Children yet unborne to curse you, for making them slaves by your covetousnesse, cowardly basenesse and faint-heartednesse; therefore up as one man, and in a just and legall way call those to account, that endeavour to destroy you, and betray your Liberties and Freedomes.'<sup>26</sup> Let us note the specific characteristic of the revolutionary spirit of the Levelers, the utopianism of their political thinking. 'In a just and legal way' meant to seek radical change within the framework of the existing law! Such was the range of solutions proposed by Lilburne to the political, legal and socio-economic issues which from now to the end of the revolution were to constitute the watershed between the revolutionary democrats who defended them, and the conservative majority in the Long Parliament which *opposed* them with all its might.

On 14 November, 1645, Lilburne was released from Newgate prison, but he did not remain free for long. However, whether he was out of prison or in, he continued to champion the cause for which he sacrificed not only family happiness, but also his life — his struggle by means of the spoken and written word, against the oligarchy in power,

against the total indifference displayed by the Long Parliament to the position of nine tenths of the English population. In the spring of 1646, Lilburne found himself involved in a new conflict with Parliament, this time with the House of Lords. Summoned on 10 May to appear at the bar of this House in connection with his attacks on one of its members, the Earl of Manchester, in the pamphlet 'The Just Mans Justification', Lilburne appealed to Magna Carta to deny the right of this House to judge and sentence commoners in criminal cases. As a result, on 11 June, he was again sent to Newgate prison under strict supervision. However, as we already know, while in prison Lilburne was able to pass on information about what was happening to him in order to open everyone's eyes to the situation in the country in general, and the position of ordinary people in particular. By 16 June another pamphlet, 'The Freemans Freedome Vindicated', was also published. It related not only what had happened to him over the previous days, but also set out Lilburne's political philosophy: 'God ... gave man ... a rational understanding, and thereby created him after His own image ... every particular and individual man and woman ... in the world since, who are and were, by nature all equal and alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty, none of them having by nature any authority, dominion or magisterial power one over or above another; neither have they, or can they exercise any, but merely ... by mutual consent and agreement, for the good ... and comfort each of other ... it being unnatural, irrational ... sinful, wicked, and unjust ... for any man or men whatsoever to part with so much of their power as shall enable any of their Parliamentary men, commissioners, trustees, deputies ... to destroy and undo them therewith. And unnatural, irrational ... devilish and tyrannical it is for any man whatsoever spiritual or temporal, clergyman or layman ... to assume unto himself a power ... to rule, govern or reign over any sort of men in the world without their free consent.'<sup>27</sup> We have here the Leveller variant of the concept of the social contract, a concept which was widely known, particularly in Independent circles. However, what distinguished the Leveller interpretation was that it was used to explain not only the origins of the state, but also recognition of the competence of existing forms of the state. This analysis focused on the following question: *on what conditions have members of Parliament* (nominally

the representatives of the people) *been given the right to govern those who accorded them the power to do so?* Such a question is amazing in its revolutionary potential.

Firstly, this question was based on the implicit recognition of the initial equality of men not only according to nature, but also in terms of their public position (in the state). Secondly, it was revolutionary in its recognition that any power within society has only one source—the voluntary agreement of sovereign individuals that they be governed on conditions set down in the social contract, an agreement expressed by their free voicing of their will through the participation of each in the election of future magistrates. This underlined the secondary nature of the sovereignty of the state, derived from the will of the people, delegated by the people, temporary and conditional. Thirdly, emphasis was placed on the *inalienable rights* of each individual, which no external power has the right to encroach upon. In short, the Leveller interpretation asserted the equality of all individuals before the state authority, independently of their property or social status.

It is no surprise to discover that this pamphlet again brought Lilburne to the bar of the House of Lords, and this time he was delivered there by force. Here he refused to kneel, as was the custom. Ordered to do so, he replied: 'I have learnt better religion and manners than to kneel to any human or mortal power, however great, whom I have not offended'.<sup>28</sup> As one might expect, he was sent to Newgate with the order that he was to be kept close prisoner without pen, ink and paper.

On 11 July, 1646, Lilburne appeared before the court of the House of Lords accused of slanderous, scandalous and malicious attacks on it with the aim of provoking discord between the two Houses. This time Lilburne not only refused to kneel, but put his fingers in his ears so as not to hear the charge and not reply to the questions put to him; the only thing which the lords heard from him was that 'he would not hear it; he having appealed to the House of Commons from this House, to which he would stand to as long as he had Life'.<sup>29</sup> He was fined £2,000, and imprisoned in the Tower 'during the pleasure of the House', and also disqualified from 'office or place, military or civil, in Church or State'.<sup>30</sup> His pamphlets 'The Just Mans Justification' and 'The Freemans Freedome Vindicated' were publicly burned.

Thus, in the summer of 1646, the Levellers, in the person of Lilburne, began their political battle, which centred on the question of the constitutional system of the country. Indeed, the central fact of Lilburne's appeal to the lower House against the action of the House of Lords, the fact that he saw the House of Commons as elected and endowed with the trust of all the communities of England as the only formal and legal supreme power in the country, contained a direct denial not only of the juridical authority of the House of Lords, but even of its constitutional powers in general. By placing at the centre of the Leveller political battle the question of the source of any power in society, the purposes for which it exists and to whom it is answerable, Lilburne had exposed the *basic knot of the social contradictions of his day*. The words spoken by Lilburne at the bar of the House of Lords rang out like a tocsin along the streets of London: 'Sir, I am a free-man of England, and therefore I am not to be used as a slave or vassell by the Lords... I cannot without turning traitor to my liberties, dance attendance to their Lordships Bar, being bound in conscience, duty to God, my selfe, myne and my country, to oppose their incroachments to the death, which by the strength of God I am resolved to doe. Sir you may or cause to be exercised upon me some force or violence to pull or drag me out of my chamber ... and therefore I desire you, in a friendly way, to be wise and considerate before you doe that which it may be you can never undoe.'<sup>31</sup>

Walwyn and Overton, Lilburne's friends and companions, came to his defence. Walwyn wrote the pamphlet 'A Pearle in a Dounghill', in which he declared: 'The People are become a Knowing and Judicious People; Affliction hath made them wise, now Oppression maketh wise men mad; ther's no deluding wise men; it is all one to them who oppresseth them; and if Parliaments do in truth and deed really deliver them, they will love Parliaments, otherwise they will abominate them, because for a People to be made slaves by or in time of Parliament is like as for a man to be betrayed and murdered by his own father.'<sup>32</sup>

Overton's pamphlet 'A Remonstrance of many Thousand Citizens of England to their owne House of Commons' was written in similar, but even more decisive tone: '...calling those their Commissioners in Parliament to an Account, how they (since the beginning of their Session, to

this present) have discharged their Duties to the Universality of the People, their Sovereaign Lord, from whom their Power and Strength is derived.<sup>33</sup> From the title of the pamphlet alone it is not difficult to conclude that the author intended not only to express his indignation at Parliament's harsh persecution of Lilburne. In fact, the pamphlet contained the Leveller theoretical platform, as in it were formulated the constitutional principles which, albeit only under the pressure of irreversible historical events, had only at the beginning of 1642 become the basis of the new republican state government of the country.

Overton not only restated, but also further developed Lilburne's ideas.

Firstly, the 'Remonstrance' pointed to the intolerable inconvenience of 'having a Kingly Government', and demanded 'to acquit us of so great a charge and trouble for ever'. Secondly, Overton stressed that only the House of Commons possessed that power, acceptance of which was mandatory for the entire nation, since it had been elected and given its powers by that nation. As for the lords, these were nothing but 'usurpers' imposed by the kings. Consequently their power to veto *acts passed by the House of Commons* should be abolished. This was, in effect, to declare the House of Lords superfluous.

We have before us the beginnings of a radical form of bourgeois democracy—republicanism—constituting the core of Leveller ideology and based on the principle of popular sovereignty *temporarily delegated to elected representatives*, who therefore remain answerable to the electors.

Overton concluded his pamphlet with an appeal to the House of Commons as the sole repository of power binding together the whole nation: 'Hide not your thoughts from us, and give us encouragement of to be open-breasted to you: proclaim aforehand what ye determine to do, in establishing anything for continuance; and hear all things that can be spoken with or against the same, and to that intent, set the imprisoned Presses at liberty...'<sup>34</sup>

In another pamphlet, 'An Alarum to the House of Lords', published at the end of June, 1646, and also written in defence of Lilburne, Overton formulated a question which penetrated to the essence of the changes in the policy of the Long Parliament following the end of the civil war. 'Is it seditious for a freeman unjustly imprisoned, to publish the same to all the world? It was not so judged in

the beginning of this Parliament, but then was the beginning of Freedom, and it seems we are at the end thereof; and at the beginning of a new bondage'.<sup>35</sup> This was a truth revealed only from the position of the popular masses who had been deceived in their hopes for a better future. Now, when the victory was won, these masses, their needs and aspirations, interested the Long Parliament no more than they had the royal government. The 'freedom' which the people had been loudly promised in such vague phraseology proved in the event to be only freedom for the Presbyterian oligarchy (predominant in the Long Parliament) to impose its will on those who had fought to win this freedom. Naturally, the discrepancy between what Parliament had declared at the start and during the civil war as the aim in the name of which it was being conducted, and the position of the masses following the end of the war could not but provoke acute dissatisfaction among those who had been deceived in their hopes and cast off. Lilburne spoke of this unequivocally: 'If I be called a state heretic I answer for myself that the Parliament's own declarations has made me so, and if I be deluded and deceived, they are the men who have done it'.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the fact that, from the summer of 1646, the Long Parliament intensified its repression of the illegal press, Lilburne and Overton energetically supplied it with pamphlets from prison. Here is a short list: 'Regall Tyrannie Discovered' (royal power had acquired a tyrannical nature since the Norman conquest of England); 'The Charters of London' and 'Londons Liberty in Chains' (in defence of the democratic organization of the city authorities); 'The Oppressed Mans Oppressions Declared' (a description of Lilburne's imprisonment). The majority are ascribed to Lilburne. There is evidence that the Levellers' pamphlets were distributed not only in London but also in the counties. This is confirmed by the fact that in February, 1647, the 'honest people' of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire came to London with a petition addressed to the House of Commons with ten thousand signatures. Among its demands was the release of Lilburne, Overton and other Levellers. However, those who went to deliver it were not admitted into the House, and they were obliged to leave the petition with London supporters who could make further attempts to deliver it to Parliament (in the event all these attempts proved futile).

Meanwhile, in the capital itself, signatures were being collected for a petition which has come down in history as the Large Petition. Although this petition was still being drawn up, someone obligingly handed in a copy in advance to the House of Commons, where it provoked a panic. It contained a broad programme of reforms, including demands for freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the abolition of monopolies and church tithe, relief for the poor, etc. The subsequent arrests among the Levellers did not halt this petition campaign.

On 22 May, the Large Petition was burned publicly by the city hangman on the orders of the House of Commons. 'Now we shall have an end of our troubles,' remarked a Presbyterian who was standing by. 'No, this is but the beginning of them,' retorted an Independent. Fearing open mass demonstrations, the Presbyterian-minded fathers of the City expelled the Independents from the city militia committee and replaced them with their own men. Now, should there be disturbances, Parliament had at its disposal the 18-thousand strong London militia under the command of the Presbyterians. In the spring of 1647 a third force appeared on the national political scene alongside Parliament and the Levellers (primarily in London): the New Model Army. Its conflict with the Presbyterian majority in Parliament meant that this time Parliament faced an opposition with which—unlike the Levellers, who remained within the framework of the law—it was impossible to deal by burning petitions and imprisonment. From that moment on, the Levellers linked their hopes for the further democratization of the content of the revolution with the position of the army, in which the spirit of Independence was widespread, particularly among the soldiers and junior officers. As the conflict between the army and Parliament increased, it acquired a more clearly political nature as the army became the voice expressing the interests of all those dissatisfied with the political conservatism of Parliament.

'Our army,' read one of the army declarations called *Vox Militaris*, 'made up chiefly of volunteers, have amongst them men ... of approved piety and men of parts. We were not merely mercenary soldiers, brought together by the hopes of pay and the fortunes of wars'.<sup>37</sup>

In the pamphlets of Lilburne, Overton and Walwyn the radically-minded soldiers and officers naturally found the

answers to the questions which concerned them. The reading and discussion of Leveller literature, as also listening to the speeches of popular preachers, aroused in these sons of peasants and craftsmen dressed in military uniform an awareness of their duty to their people not only in war, but also in peacetime, when the question of the post-war government of the country was being decided. Shortly after Naseby, the Puritan preacher Baxter, having visited an army camp, wrote: 'I found many honest but men of ignorance ... seduced into a disputing vein, talking for church democracy or state democracy'. He explained this as the result of 'the distribution of the pamphlets of Overton and Lilburne and others, against the King and the ministry and for the liberty of conscience'.<sup>38</sup> They aver, Baxter continued, that the lords of England were simply the colonels of William the Conqueror, the barons—his majors, the knights—his captains. Clearly exaggerating, another contemporary wrote that the entire army was 'Lilburne throughout'.<sup>39</sup> For his part, Lilburne declared: 'I could have got so many to have followed me as would have enabled me with my sword in my hand to have done justice and execution upon those grand treacherous fellows and tyrants at Westminster'.<sup>40</sup> He made no distinction between his own freedom and the cause of the soldiers. This was all the more natural for him since, as has already been noted, he saw his own imprisonment as part of the battle to secure the fundamental freedoms of each and every 'free-born' Englishman. The chief intermediary between the imprisoned Lilburne and the army was Edward Sexby, one of the leading agitators. Soldiers who had joined Cromwell's troops in 1643 and who visited Lilburne kept him regularly informed about the state of affairs in the army. Lilburne's wife, Elizabeth, carried out particularly important missions as an intermediary. According to Lilburne, she was 'the gravest, wisest and fittest messenger I could think of, and though a Feminine, yet of a gallant and true masculine spirit'.<sup>41</sup>

In March, 1647, when Cromwell was convincing the House of Commons that the army would obey its order to disband, Lilburne sent him a letter from the Tower in which he passionately appealed to him to defend freedom, that is, to speak in support of the army. 'If tyranny be resistable, then it is resistable in a Parliament as well as a King'. Arguing that he had no personal interests or calcu-



lations, he told Cromwell: 'Sir, I have but a life to lose... Sir, I am not mad, nor out of my wits, but full of apprehensions of slavish consequences ... if the Army doe disband ... before they see the lawes and universall well known liberties of England fairly settled'.<sup>42</sup> This letter remained unanswered. When Cromwell left London to join the troops so as not to lose control over the army, in which the so-called agitators were attaining ever more decisive and independent authority, Lilburne sent him a second letter declaring that 'with the expense of a great deal of money, and with all the interest and industry I had in the world; acted both night and day to settle the Souldiers in a compleat and just posture' so as 'by their faithfull agitators chosen out by common consent from amongst themselves, as resolute, fit, and just instruments to affect my Liberty, to give a checke to tyranny, and settle the peace and justice of the Kingdome, not looking for any good at all from yourselfe'.<sup>43</sup> Can there be any doubt that the prisoner in the Tower played a role in the idea of choosing agitators in the regiments and in the determination of their aims in the face of direct or covert sabotage on the part of the senior officers (grandeens)? However, in the latest English literature devoted to this question one can easily detect a tendency to separate the process of radicalization from the movement of so-termed civilian Levellers, the period of their convergence being placed as late as the eve of the conference at Putney. Whatever the case may be, *the democratic organization of the agitators then exercising control in the army, obliging even the senior officers to take them into account, became from then on Lilburne's main hope for the introduction of a democratic system of government in post-war England.*

Lilburne's pamphlet 'Rash Oaths Unwarrantable' was published at the end of May, 1647. It was aimed at exposing the transformation that had taken place in the members of Parliament. What was the existing Parliament, if not 'a conspiracy and confederacy of lawlesse, unlimited, and unbounded men, that have actually destroyed the Lawes and Liberties of England, and that will have no rule to walke by but their owne corrupted and bloody wills, and thereby have set up the highest Tyranny that can be set up in the world, against which ... the Kingdome may justly rise up in Armes as one man, and destroy all the afore-said conspirators without mercy or compassion,... for take away

Law and deny us Justice and Right,... and what are we now better then the brute beasts of the field?'<sup>44</sup>

Lilburne was, in fact, calling for the continuation of the revolution, for a new revolution, this time aimed against the degenerate power of the Long Parliament. He called for it to be overthrown by force of arms. In its place, England was to be ruled by an annually elected Parliament, on the condition that every free man, poor and rich, could give his vote for those who were to be authorized to legislate and govern.

This corresponded to the principle that it is 'unnatural ... for any man whatsoever ... to assume unto himself a power ... to rule, govern or reign over any sort of men in the world without their free consent'. If one views this pamphlet as one of the early Leveller outlines of a new constitution for the country, then it must be recognized as frankly *republican*, insofar as it contains no reference either to royal power or to the House of Lords. Consequently, as it acknowledges the people to be the source of all power in society, then in exactly the same way only a House of Commons elected by the vote of the people can be the legitimate embodiment of the people's will.

Lilburne's enemies, not without reason, saw the agitators as Lilburne's product. As for Lilburne himself, he saw their cause as meriting eternal praise. When one recalls how close were the links between the agitators and Lilburne, it is difficult to imagine that Lilburne knew nothing of the plans for an expedition by Cornet Joyce to seize the King. In the pamphlet 'Plaine Truth without Feare or Flattery' (May, 1647), Lilburne wrote: 'Wee the free Commons of England, the reall and essentiall body politicke...; and the Army in particular ... may lawfully retaine, order and dispose of their arms and strength to and for the preservation and safety of the King and Kingdome, the principall end for which they were raised.'<sup>45</sup>

The seizure of the King by a unit under the command of Cornet Joyce revealed not only the political maturity and boldness of the agitators, but also indicated quite unequivocally the degree of power they possessed in the army.

It was precisely this factor which prompted Cromwell, then vacillating between loyalty to Parliament and fear of losing his power over the troops, and with that his prestige and influence in Parliament, to take the decisive step and support the army.

On 5 June at Newmarket, at the army review, a Solemn Engagement was undertaken not to lay down arms until there was 'such an establishment of common and equal right and freedom to the whole, as all might equally partake of'.<sup>46</sup> On 14 June, in the name of the New Model Army, a declaration entitled 'A Representation from Sir Thomas Fairfax and the army under his command' was published which contained the following famous words: 'We were not a mere mercenary army, hired to serve any arbitrary power ... but called forth by the several declarations of Parliament, to the defence of our own and people's just rights and liberties'.<sup>47</sup>

Although during this period the decisive role in army affairs was played not by the Military Council (composed of senior officers), but by the Army Council (which included, in addition to senior officers, two representatives from the agitators and two officers from each regiment), the divergence between the interests of the agitators and those of the senior officers made itself felt soon after Cromwell's arrival, and he quickly acted to restrict the agitators' power.

Meanwhile, the prisoner in the Tower, well informed about the state of affairs in the army and in London ('intermediaries' between Levellers in the capital and the army visited him regularly), encouraged the agitators to take *independent* and *resolute* action. Nor did these appeals go unheeded. On 15 June, the Army Council demanded the expulsion from Parliament of eleven leading Presbyterian members of the House of Commons. On 22 June, Lilburne begged Cromwell to march towards London, where 'friends' would help him to sequester the eleven members. Cromwell, however, was still supporting the policy of 'constitutional action'; he did not trust the army, in which so much influence was still exercised by the agitators, and was afraid of the possible consequences if the army entered the capital, where the populace was in ferment. He could not but note how closely the agitators took the fate of Lilburne and his companions to heart, demanding their release.

On 1 July, Lilburne again sent Cromwell a letter, called 'Jonah's Cry out of the Whale's Belly'. It was full of reproach and indignation: 'You have rob'd by your unjust subtiltie and shifting trickes the honest and gallant agitators, of all their power and authority.' Lilburne threatened

to lead a revolt by his 'friends', who would secure his release by force, 'unlesse you ... take some speedy course, that I face to face may speake my mind to your selfe'.<sup>48</sup> This was a direct threat. Lilburne then delivered an ultimatum: 'I desire a positive and satisfactory answer within foure days at the farthest'. On 16 July, at a meeting of the Army Council, the agitators again demanded that the army march on London in response to the 'heavy pressures, great destructions, continual fears, and eminent dangers, under which this poor and bleeding Kingdom groans'.<sup>49</sup> They again demanded the release of Lilburne and the payment of the long-promised material compensation. However, Fairfax and Cromwell again resisted. Nor is this surprising. The position of Lilburne and the agitators at that moment was that the 'unjust, tyrannicall, and unrighteous'<sup>50</sup> actions of Parliament had rendered void the social contract, and had thereby released the subjects from the obligation to obey it. Thus *the time had come for those whom Parliament represented to move to direct action in defence of their liberties*.

The position of Cromwell and those close to him, on the contrary, was dictated by fear of such actions, and therefore they continued to see Parliament as the sole 'lawful power' in the country, and negotiations with Parliament (or, more accurately, attempts to persuade it) as the sole means of resolving political problems.

It was during this time that Lilburne sent a letter to Fairfax, 'The Juglers Discovered', in which he wrote: 'What you shall resolve to do for me, do it speedily and vigorously, for perish I can not and will not, if ... nothing will serve the two Houses but my causeless destruction ... I will appeal to all the Commons of England, and the private soldiers of your Army, and do the best I can to set them about the ears, to cut their tyrannical throats, though I perish with them.'<sup>51</sup>

In the meantime, in order to give further force to its demand for the expulsion of eleven of the Presbyterian members of the Commons whom it found the most odious, the army had begun to move towards London. News of its approach quickly had its effect, and those named by the army (Holles, Stapleton and others) left the House. The army halted its march immediately. When the Presbyterians of the City attempted a coup d'état (26 July) by putting the militia in a state of alert and forcing Parliament to

vote for the King to be invited forthwith to return to London, the political crisis reached its height. In fear for their safety, 57 members of the Commons, together with their speaker, fled to the army, and Fairfax and Cromwell finally decided to take an 'unconstitutional' step: on 6 August the army entered London, meeting no resistance. The militia which had been so noisily mobilized fired not a single shot. However, even after this, Parliament refused to approve the action of the army. On 29 August, having left a military unit in Hyde Park and posted soldiers around Parliament, Cromwell finally compelled the House of Commons to sanction the army's action. Seven Presbyterian members of Parliament fled the country, one was arrested. However, though this strengthened the position of the Independents in Parliament, its attitude to the Levellers remained unchanged. Their leaders remained in prison.

Parliament was emboldened by the political cowardice of the army commanders, the so-called grandees. Mistrusting the troops and fearing an alliance between them and the London populace, Cromwell hastily withdrew the army outside the capital.

## THE FIRST OPEN LEVELLER DEMONSTRATION

Before us we have a paradoxical phenomenon—the military might of the army, and its amazing political powerlessness in the face of a group of worthless scheming politicians in control of both Houses of Parliament and deciding its policy. This paradox is explained not only by the lack of unity in the ranks of the army itself—that decisive power for democracy in a period when the revolution found itself at the crossroads—but also by the level of political maturity of the leaders of the Leveller party, the ideological standard-bearers of the radical democratization of the country's political system. Expressing the interests and aspirations above all of the craftsmen and small traders in the towns and the small-scale landholders in the countryside, the Levellers shared many of the prejudices and illusions characteristic of these strata, the same restricted outlook, idealization of tradition, absolutization of abstract law, and consequent political naivety

that resulted in *direct revolutionary action* by the masses being replaced by petitions in the name of the masses. We have already come across all these features of political thinking and conduct while following Lilburne up to 1647, and they will be even more vividly displayed by his word and deed in the years that followed. We have also looked at the discussion which developed at the Putney conference in the autumn of 1647. Now we shall concentrate on just one question: *what were the limits to which the Levellers sought to take the social revolution in the country?* Let us note to begin with that *the political rhetoric of Lilburne contained only a very vague answer to this question.* In fact, the conditions which he tirelessly reiterated – the securing of the freedoms and rights of the commons of England – were, in terms of the final aim of his struggle, socially very vague, as the concept ‘the commons of England’ was understood differently by different social strata. Lilburne’s ideas as regards the form of government best suited to attaining this aim were equally vague. By the summer of 1647 he had arrived only at the starting-point from which to seek the desired answer: insofar as Parliament had degenerated into a tyranny, it had lost its right to power, which thus returned into the hands of those whose authority Parliament wielded, that is, the commons of England. In other words, the latter had the right to establish a *new political system*, disregarding the one which had become traditional. Needless to say, there was a *fundamental difference* between the position of Lilburne, Overton and other Leveller leaders on this question and that of Cromwell and Ireton, who operated on the principle of preserving the existing system, based on tradition (that is, monarchical). At the same time, as we shall see, in various political situations Lilburne gave far from clear answers to the question of which political system would best secure the ‘freedoms and rights’ of citizens.

During the year of 1647, Lilburne placed his hopes now on the House of Commons against the tyranny of the Lords, now on the army against the House of Commons, and finally, in desperation, on the return of the King to the capital. A passing mood on Lilburne’s part should not, of course, be taken for political principle. His long imprisonment inside the stone walls of the Tower, the indifference to his fate shown not only by the Independents in the House of Commons, but also the army commanders to

whom he appealed more than once for help, could not but drive Lilburne to a frenzy. How erroneous it would be to confuse the two is revealed by the reaction of the agitators, who had learned, not without Lilburne's influence, of the secret contacts between Cromwell and Ireton on the one hand and the King on the other: 'Why did the officers now make an idol of the King? Why doe themselves kneele, and kisse, and fawne upon him?.. Oh shame of men! Oh sin against God! What, to doe thus to a man of blood; over head and eares in the blood of your dearest friends and fellow Commoners' ('A cal to all the Souldiers of the Armie', p. 5).<sup>52</sup>

At the end of September, Lilburne published the pamphlet 'The Juglers Discovered', in which he set out a programme of reform that was to be championed by the army. Leaving aside his advice that the agitators should be frequently changed, 'for standing waters though never so pure at first, in time putrify', this pamphlet contained the same demands as before: the abolition of monopolies and the tithe, the translation of the law into English, free and equal justice, and the abolition of free quarters. This was by way of being a minimal programme in which the main constitutional question, that of the system of government, was not touched upon.

On 6 September, Cromwell finally replied to the many appeals addressed to him and visited Lilburne in the Tower. He advised Lilburne to refrain from attacks on Parliament in the future, which would hasten his release. Lilburne, however, stood firm, declaring that he would do everything he could to bring Parliament down. Cromwell promised him a well-paid position in the army after his release. For all the gold in the world, Lilburne answered him, he would not accept the offer of entering the service of Parliament or the army.

'Though you have given me little encouragement, yet such is the affection I beare to you... I will not be wanting in my best endeavours to procure your liberty of the Parliament'.<sup>53</sup>

Lilburne promised he would leave England for a year if he were released and paid £2,000 – the long-promised Star Chamber reparations and half of his army arrears. Having set out these conditions in writing and sent them to Cromwell, Lilburne then waited to hear good news.

Parliament, however, delayed the hearing of the case on various pretexts. It was only on 14 September that Cromwell succeeded in drawing the attention of the House of Commons to the question. However, in order to avoid any immediate decision, it was proposed that the case be handed over to a committee to examine precedents for the jurisdiction of the House of Lords over commoners. When Lilburne learned of this decision by the House of Commons, he saw it as mockery and laid the blame for the continuation of his sufferings on Cromwell, who maintained the appearance of being dependent on Parliament, but in reality intending 'to keep the poore people everlastingly in bondage and slaverie, with a rotten and putrified Parliament'.<sup>54</sup>

Lilburne then wrote to Henry Marten (a member of Parliament famous for his republican views), declaring: 'I ... am resolved to make my complaint to the Commons of England and to see what the private Soldiers of his Excellencies Army, and the Hobnayles and the clouted Shooes will do for me...';<sup>55</sup> seeing in them his true friends and supporters. This was a threat to secure his release by means of 'unconstitutional actions', that is, the threat of a popular revolt.

The fact that neither Lilburne nor his supporters went further than verbal threats is the clearest evidence of the extent of the political immaturity of the revolutionary democracy of the day and, consequently, the timidity that dominated it in the face of ruling powers retaining the appearance of 'constitutional' authority.

It should be remembered that Lilburne himself, in his battle against Parliament, stood upon the law, upon the constitution, upon judicial precedent. How could he then become the leader of a revolt, an action clearly 'unlawful'? Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Lilburne, although the younger son in the family, himself remembered, and reminded others, that he was a gentleman: he reminded Parliament in order to oblige it to hold him of account, and he recalled it outside Parliament in order to give his arguments greater moral weight in the eyes of those for whom a gentleman still merited greater respect than one of the populace. This view was still widespread in the very groups to whom he appealed.

Taken all together, these factors perhaps explain what is otherwise, at first glance, a paradox, namely that this 'defender of the poor', at a moment of total disillusion-



ment in Cromwell and loss of faith in the possibility of securing his freedom by any other means, inclined to concluding a settlement with the King, if the latter would agree to safeguard the rights and freedoms of himself and the people. Thus the political immaturity of this leader of the radicals was still sufficient for him to hope to be granted such freedom as a 'gift', and even a gift from the hands of the monarch, the embodiment of the traditional constitution, insofar as Parliament proved incapable of granting it. This lack of discrimination as regards the means would reveal itself more than once in the future. Nonetheless, in one thing Lilburne remained consistent — in his sincere dedication to the cause of freedom, to which he devoted all his life and strength. In one of his letters to Fairfax he wrote: 'I walk not, nor act, from accidents, but from principles, and being thoroughly persuaded in my own soul they are just, righteous and honest, I will by God's goodness never depart from them, though I perish in maintaining them'.<sup>56</sup> Be that as it may, when the King escaped from Hampton Court (11 November, 1647), this put an end to attempts to establish contact between him and the agitators. Nor had this plan won the approval of all Lilburne's supporters (in particular Colonels Rainsborough, Sexby and others). This is also shown by a letter sent to the King and signed E.P. It warned that on 8 November eight or nine agitators had agreed to kill the King. This letter was found at Hampton Court after Charles I had escaped. By this time, changes had occurred in Lilburne's situation. On 9 November he was allowed to leave the prison during the day and return at night. Even this semi-freedom was a blessing, for he now had the opportunity to see his family, to meet friends and supporters, and thus to exert an active influence on the Leveller movement as a whole. This movement had entered a critical phase. At the beginning of September, new agitators had been elected in most of the regiments, an event which had Lilburne's enthusiastic support. At that moment the contradictions between the radicals and the grandees had threatened to overflow into an open refusal by the soldiers to obey their officers. There were also signs of a storm brewing outside the army. Lilburne's attacks on Cromwell and his associates intensified, particularly when, on 20 October, Cromwell defended the monarchical system in the House of Commons following Henry Marten's proposal

that all relations with the King be severed. The moderate Independents, for their part, accused the Levellers of seeking anarchy and 'equalization of property'. Here is an illustration of how they depicted Leveller ideals:

*No more a beggar under bush  
No more a lowzie-marlet  
The pedlar now shall prounce in plush  
And scoundrel march in scarlet.*

It was in this situation that there appeared the pamphlet 'The Case of the Armie Truly Stated', which became the starting-point of the debates in Putney on the question of the post-war government of the country. Although it was signed by eleven newly-elected agitators, the pamphlet was written by the Leveller Wildman and, indirectly, by all the London ideologists of the Leveller movement. As the 'case of the army' is virtually identified with the case of 'the poore oppressed people', the pamphlet consisted essentially of demands whose realization would have turned England into a democratic republic. Nor was the army seen as the instrument of this transformation. Its concrete programme, which included the main demands of the Levellers, and above all those of Lilburne, had been set out in previous pamphlets by Leveller ideologists, and became the initial outline of the famous Agreement of the People — the first attempt to draw up a written constitution of England. At the Putney conference, the spokesman for the Levellers was John Wildman (Lilburne and Overton were still in prison), for Walwyn preferred the written to the spoken word.

There is no need here to describe in detail the course of the Putney conference. Suffice it to say that the fact of holding such a conference testified primarily to the influence of the Leveller ideology in the army. Intended by the grandees as a tactical concession to the demands of the soldiers and junior officers in whose name the agitators addressed the conference, it was supposed to create the impression that those demands were receiving impartial examination, and thereby remove the then very real threat that the army would refuse to obey its generals. As regards the positions of the two sides, the following curious fact deserves attention. The Levellers, particularly in the person of Lilburne, who had so stubbornly defended in

the conflict with Parliament the letter and the spirit of England's 'constitutional' heritage (the endless references to Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and statutes) in fact addressed the Putney conference as *revolutionaries* overthrowing the very foundations of this heritage. They raised the standard of a Republic governed by a democratically elected Parliament, for they believed that, given the hostility of the King and the degeneration of Parliament, England had returned to its 'natural state', and the political settlement should begin with a new 'agreement' in accord with the principles of natural law. The grandees—Cromwell and Ireton—on the other hand, defended the historical constitution of England and the corresponding 'civil right' based on the principle of property ownership, that is, a slightly modified variant of the monarchical system of government through a Parliament elected by only one tenth of the population.

However, in order to avoid over-simplification, one other factor should be noted. In the course of the debates, the Levellers gradually moved away from the *consistent* realization of natural law in the electoral system, agreeing to the exclusion not only of women, but also of male servants and beggars, who had lost the capacity for independent expression of their will. Thus they took a step towards the principle advanced by Ireton, which was that the potential elector should, in addition to the fact of being born in the country, also have a constant interest in it, that is, property in one or other part of it. At the same time, Cromwell and Ireton, while denying that England had returned to a 'natural state' since Parliament had been preserved, and with it all the 'constitutional foundations', nonetheless also appealed to the theory of an agreement, as behind it stood the interests of the England of property owners, who alone possessed a 'constant interest' and therefore had the right to constitute the organs of power in the country.

It is at this point that we come to the most important issue of all—the position of the Levellers on the question of electoral law. It seems to us that in existing literature on the subject, including the latest publications, this problem is manifestly over-simplified. As the Agreement of the People was, as it were, a resume of the Leveller programme (the phraseology of this document undoubtedly reveals Lilburne's influence on the content), we shall re-

call its basic propositions. The preamble ran as follows: 'Having by our late labours and hazards made it appeare to the world as how high a rate we value our just freedom, and God having so far owned our cause, as to deliver the Enemies thereof into our hands: We do now hold our selves bound in mutual duty to each other, to take the best care we can for the future, to avoid both the danger of returning into a slavish condition, and the chargable remedy of another war: for as it cannot be imagined that so many of our Country-men would have opposed us in this quarrel, if they had understood their owne good, so may we safely promise to our selves, that when our Common Rights and Liberties shall be cleared, their endeavours will be disappointed, that seek to make themselves our Masters.'<sup>57</sup> The four basic commands which drew our attention following this preamble are: 1) a democratic electoral system; 2) the dissolution of the existing Parliament within the year; 3) a two-year term of office for each newly-elected Parliament; 4) the recognition of the inalienable nature of a number of freedoms, in which spheres Parliament does not have the right to interfere, that is, to legislate. Finally, the very absence of any reference to the King and the House of Lords indicates that the system of government envisaged is no other than republican.

Let us look more closely at only the first of these Leveller demands. The questions can be formulated as follows: what lay behind the demand for universal male suffrage?

We have already had occasion to touch briefly upon this question. Let us now examine it in more detail. In the existing literature devoted to the position of the Levellers on the issue of electoral law, it seems to us that two aspects of the question have been confused together, namely: 1) the internal logic of the Leveller programme, derived from the principle of natural law; and 2) the political interpretation of this principle in *the historical conditions obtaining in England in the middle of the 17th century*. The essence of the first of these two aspects was set out with maximum clarity by Colonel Rainsborough during the debates at Putney: 'I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live, as the greatest he; and therefore truly, sir, I think it's clear, that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government; and I do think that the

poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under.<sup>58</sup> There can be no doubt but that Rainsborough, when speaking of 'the poorest man in England' as having an equal right to elect the government under whose authority he is to put himself, was basing himself on the abstract principle of the sovereign individual, on the sovereignty of the individual as an 'inherent right'. However, when the Leveller ideologists were faced with the need to define the concrete content of the concept of civil freedom which they used so widely, it turned out that in fact the individual could *lose* this 'inherent right', as a decisive constitutional element was that the income, and therefore the voice of the individual, should be independent of the power and will of another. In other words, the lower boundary of civil freedom was the position of the small-scale independent producer, both in the crafts and in agriculture. Below that boundary, that is, in the absence of an income independent of another's will, the 'inherent right' was as it were lost, 'eclipsed'.

Hence the concept of 'free-born' in Leveller terminology indicated only the potential civil freedom of the individual, which could remain unrealized in fact if the individual was in the position of a 'hired servant' or a beggar living on the charity of others. Thus the Levellers were clarifying the concept of freedom as ideologists, anticipating the later terminology of petty-bourgeois strata in the town and countryside. The main difference between the Levellers and the 'silken Independents' on this question was, first of all, that the Levellers ignored any qualitative definition of the property (for example, whether the basis of this independence for the rural inhabitant was a freeholding, a copyholding or a leaseholding). Secondly, they also ignored the quantitative definition of the property (that is, the size of the annual income, etc.) provided only that it protected the recipient from the danger of 'alienating' his 'inherent right' by selling his labour on the labour market.

In short, in reality only the existence of some minimal property (independent source of income) made the individual, in the eyes of the Levellers, independent in the civil (political) sense, that is, was the condition of the individual's 'possession' of his own voice and of his ability to realize his 'inherent right'. Such was the internal contradiction

in the Leveller interpretation of the principle of 'inherent right'. If the Leveller interpretation of the principle of 'freedom' had been adopted, the number of electors would have doubled in comparison to the number under the existing system. On the other hand, if the principle of universal male suffrage had been adopted, the number would have quadrupled. It is not surprising to learn that Petty, one of the most radically-minded orators at Putney, calmed the *grandeers*, fearful that the principle of universal male suffrage would lead to the abolition of property, with the words: '...and therefore men agreed to come into some form of government that they might preserve property'.<sup>59</sup>

We have decided to look at this question in detail because it will help us better to understand both how Lilburne and Cromwell could draw closer politically, and also how Lilburne and his supporters could unequivocally dissociate themselves from the aspirations of those strata for whom the preservation of the principle of the inviolability of private property meant only a new form of their own enslavement. During the Putney conference, Lilburne met with the agitators almost every day and directed their campaign in the army in favour of the Agreement of the People. When Cromwell managed, by draconian methods, to re-establish discipline and obedience among the troops, the Levellers concentrated their efforts on propagating the Agreement not only in London but also in the counties. Petitions were handed in to Parliament demanding that this document be considered. On 9 November Parliament countered by adopting a resolution which stated that the Agreement did not merit discussion. Assuming, quite rightly, that it was ignorance which prevented people from recognizing 'the true nature of their rights', the Levellers set up committees everywhere with the purpose of explaining the content of the Agreement of the People, particularly to the populace. In London, one of the twelve elected members of such a committee was John Lilburne. Still officially imprisoned (although for sometimes he had not returned to the Tower even at night), Lilburne brought his characteristic fervour to the tavern meetings, where signatures were collected in support of the Agreement.

Lilburne and his associates were at the centre of an organization which had spread across the whole country. Communication between the individual branches was by means of 'agents' who travelled between the capital and

the counties, while within the county itself the movement had its own representatives who travelled round the towns and larger villages. Finally, each parish had its local representatives who explained the content of national law and collected signatures. Lilburne conducted a lively correspondence with local representatives, instructed 'agents' leaving for the counties, and spoke at meetings in various districts of London and its outskirts. The Petition, which the Levellers planned to hand in to Parliament at the end of January, 1648, was largely the work of Lilburne. Its content differed considerably from that of the Agreement of the People. In the first place, the Petition proposed that the House of Commons proclaim itself the 'supreme power' and also decide whether its members were servants of the people or self-appointed tyrants. Then, in place of that part of the Leveller programme which the members of Parliament found most odious, came the demand for a reform of the legal system. The jurisdiction of certain courts was to be strictly defined, and unnecessary courts abolished. The entire body of inherited law was to be translated into English. No judge was to serve for more than three years. The economic demands of the Petition read as follows: monopolies were to be abolished as they destroyed not only freedom but also property; in order to meet the needs of the poor, social funds should be created, buildings and land acquired, and vacant land ameliorated with a view to using the revenue for public requirements; national production was to be developed so that the poor should receive more pay for their labour, and the herring industry was to be improved for the benefit of sailors and the nation as a whole. Every month a national and local (county) report should be published on public revenue and expenditure; excise was described as 'burthensom' and as lying heavy 'only upon the Poorer, and most ingenious industrious People ... whereby Trade decays...'.<sup>60</sup> In place of the excise tax, the Levellers demanded the introduction of proportional property tax. Finally, the Petition contained a demand for universal suffrage and a more equitable distribution of electoral constituencies. Characteristically, when demanding material compensation for those who had been persecuted for supporting the cause of Parliament, the Petition named not only Lilburne, but also his enemies — Prynne and Bastwick. This was a gesture of conciliation with the aim of presen-

ting a united front to the army grandees. As early as January, 1648, Parliament began to receive reports that Lilburne was attempting to 'seduce the people', encouraging them to support the Agreement. These accusations shortly became known to the accused, that is, to Lilburne, and he immediately appeared before Parliament without waiting to be arrested. When, on 19 January, he arrived to answer the charges brought against him, he met a crowd of sympathizers at the entrance who wanted to know how things would end. Answering the accusations levelled against him (among which was an alleged call for the assassination of Cromwell), Lilburne replied: 'I could not but stand amazed at the man's impudence, that he durst with so much confidence tell ... so many lies as he did.'<sup>61</sup> Admitting that he had played a major part in drafting the Earnest Petition and in drawing attention to it both in London and in the counties, he denied everything which could be interpreted as conspiratorial activity. Nonetheless, Parliament decided against him, and he was again condemned to strict isolation in the Tower. Declaring that the warrant issued by Parliament was illegal, Lilburne demanded its correction, and pledged to appear in Parliament the following day to receive the corrected version. The next day, armed with the 'Institutes' of the lawyer Edward Coke—a work which in parliamentary circles enjoyed the authority of an officially recognized interpretation of current law—Lilburne appeared in Parliament.

The House of Commons had still not begun its session, and Lilburne began to set out the legal basis of the given case to the soldiers guarding the entrance, telling them '...that they were raised to fight to preserve the liberties and freedoms of England, but not to destroy them, which they must of necessity do if they laid violent hands upon me to force me to prison upon the House's illegal warrant...'<sup>62</sup>

On 5 February, a certain Walter Frost published a pamphlet entitled 'A Declaration of Some Proceedings' in which he replied, on Parliament's behalf, to the Petition. Among the answers which Frost gave to the complaints set out in the Petition, we find: 'You complain that the members of the House of Commons are chosen only by freeholders, and not by all the free-born people in the kingdom ... whether it be not an injury to all the rest, that they so chosen must be ordered and directed by you?'<sup>63</sup> We see



here a typical example of evading the essence of the question by accusing those who have raised the 'inconvenient question'. All in all, the author finds that the Petition deserves to be burnt 'if the matter be unjust, false, scandalous, seditious',<sup>64</sup> and those who presented it deserving of punishment.

At the end of February, 1648, Lilburne replied to Frost's 'Declaration' in a pamphlet entitled 'A Whip for the Present House of Lords'. However, Lilburne's attack was directed not only against the House of Lords, but also against Cromwell. Defending the Levellers against charges spread by their enemies, Lilburne repeated an argument which had been often used before, in particular at the Putney conference: the Levellers were the true defenders of freedom and property, and in no way egalitarians or anarchists. 'Those that you nickname Levellers [are] the supporters and defenders of Liberty and propriety, or Anti-Grandeers, Anti-Imposters, Anti-Monopolists, Anti-Apostates, Anti-Arbitrarians and Anti-[economic] Levellers.'<sup>65</sup> Let us note in particular the first and last phrases: Lilburne is distancing himself not only from his opponents on the right, but also from his supporters on the left, that is, from that trend which had taken shape under the general term 'Levellers' and which was already demanding not only political equality for free-born Englishmen, but property equality—a trend whose adherents would shortly call themselves 'True Levellers'.

About himself Lilburne wrote that, despite eleven years of harsh persecution, he remained a supporter of democratic and patriotic principles, '...a faithful Englishman, in maintaining and justifying ... [his] liberties and freedoms, and sticking close to the law of the land', whereas his persecutors, in particular Cromwell and Ireton, were 'usurping tyrants, and destroyers of law and liberty'.<sup>66</sup>

Replying to Frost's comment that there was a widespread rumour about a 'pestilence' being secretly spread—'the doctrine of Parity or Levelling, bringing all men's estates to an Equality', Lilburne sent a letter to Frost in which he indignantly denied such a charge, and demanded evidence that any of the leading Levellers had revealed the slightest tendency to the destruction of freedom and property, that is, to 'levelling by universall Communitie'.<sup>67</sup> He emphasized that the basis for terming them Levellers lay only in the fact that the tyranny represented

by Cromwell, Ireton and their associates was for them as intolerable as that of the King and his 'Cavaliers', and that the only form of levelling which they were seeking was that of equality before the law.

The re-imprisonment of Lilburne in the Tower did not interrupt his pamphlet writing. Between April and June, 1648, he published three pamphlets in which his personal imprisonment was yet again presented as the national drama of the 'free-born' Englishman whose basic and legally recognized rights were trampled underfoot by a Parliament in which the influence of the Independents was growing and which acted, therefore, with the approval of Cromwell and his associates. In June, 1648, the first issue of a weekly Leveller newspaper 'The Moderate' was published, and it played an important role in spreading Leveller ideas, revealing the position of the mass of the population, and drawing attention to the fate of the leaders of the movement. Sixty-three issues were published before it was closed down by the authorities in September, 1649.

Internal shifts and a redistribution of the class forces in the parliamentary camp as a result of the growing royalist threat (following the flight of the King to the Isle of Wight and, in particular, the conclusion of an alliance between Charles I and the Scots), prompted the Presbyterian majority in Parliament to take steps to attract onto their side the Levellers, who up to that point had fired their sharpest arrows at the 'silken Independents' led by Cromwell. These steps included measures taken to ease Lilburne's situation. On 18 April, the House of Commons ordered that he be paid 40 shillings a week. This, however, did not prevent the Judges of the King's Bench, which were investigating (on Lilburne's insistence) the reasons for his arrest, from finding them sufficient to justify his imprisonment in the Tower (in reply to this sentence, Lilburne exclaimed: 'If this be good Law which you declare unto me then perfect slaves are we indeed').<sup>68</sup> On 1 May, the second civil war began. On 27 June, Sir John Maynard, a Presbyterian, rose from his seat in the House of Commons in order to 'remind' those present of the fate of Lilburne, of all that this invincible spirit had done and suffered in the name of the cause of Parliament. The reason for this speech was a Leveller petition with several thousand signatures. This time it was accepted with benevolence. On 1 August, the House of Commons adopted a resolution to

lift the charges against Lilburne, a decision supported the next day by the House of Lords. At the end of August, Parliament's 'courting' of Lilburne had gone so far that it was decided to pay him £2,000 compensation out of the revenue of estates confiscated from Lord Coventry. This was compensation for the damage inflicted on Lilburne before the revolution by the Star Chamber on a sentence passed by this same Lord Coventry. Later the sum was increased to £3,000, but was then paid from the revenue of other confiscated royalist estates in the north of England.

Lilburne, however, proved 'ungrateful' and failed to justify the hopes of the Presbyterian politicians. In view of the growing royalist danger (royalist revolts were flaring up in various counties), not to mention the Scottish invasion, Lilburne, instead of joining the Presbyterians, took what was, after the experience of the previous months, the difficult step of attempting a reconciliation with Cromwell. The day after his release, Lilburne sent Cromwell a letter in which he wrote: '...but to demonstrate unto you that I am no staggerer from my first principles, that I engaged my life upon, nor from you, if you are what you ought to be ... although if I prosecuted or desired revenge for an hard and almost starving imprisonment, I could have had of late the choices of twenty opportunities to have paid you to the purpose; but I scorn it, especially when you are low: and this assure yourself, that if ever my hand be upon you, it shall be when you are in your full glory, if then you shall decline from the righteous ways of truth and justice: which, if you will fixedly and impartially prosecute, I am yours, to the last drop of my heart blood'.<sup>69</sup>

During the second civil war, John Lilburne's younger brother, Henry Lilburne, who had joined the Royalists, was killed. His head was exposed on the gates of the castle of which he had been the commandant, and which had been stormed by the parliamentary forces; his estates were confiscated. The Leveller movement suffered a heavy loss with the death at Doncaster of Colonel Rainsborough, one of the most fearless and consistent defenders of the poor. Several thousand people attended his funeral wearing the grey-green emblem of the Levellers. Lilburne did not fight in the second civil war. He was too weak from his long imprisonment, and he also needed to concern himself with his family (he already had three children), given that he was completely bankrupt, and received not a farthing com-

pensation. He set off for the north, to the confiscated estates of a certain Gibb which had been promised to him. One detail of this trip is very important in understanding the character of Lilburne. Having looked at the estates of Gibb, Lilburne expressed his doubts on the legality of the confiscation. Gibb had never been accused of any crime which might have merited such a punishment and, moreover, had done nothing personally against Lilburne. On his way there he met Cromwell and was deeply disappointed, convinced that Cromwell was more concerned with his own aggrandizement than with the well-being of the nation. It was as if Lilburne had foreseen the whole of Cromwell's future policy.

### THE LEVELLERS AT THE ZENITH OF THEIR POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Lilburne did not stay in the north for very long, but returned five days later to London in order to take part in the drafting and distribution of a lengthy petition. On 11 September the Humble Petition, under which were 40 thousand signatures, was handed in to the House of Commons. By this time the second civil war had already reached its victorious conclusion under Cromwell, and the question of the political system of the country again moved to the forefront.

The twenty-seven points in the Humble Petition set out, albeit somewhat chaotically, the entire Leveller programme as it had taken shape by that time. Its opening was indicative. The House of Commons, to whom the Petition was addressed, was termed 'the supream Authority of England' insofar as it alone could be seen historically as the representative of the people. The government of the country by two or three supreme authorities (a reference to the claims of the King and the House of Lords) was incompatible both with the security and the freedom of the nation. In the political section, the Petition rejected the right of veto of the King and the House of Lords (which meant, in effect, a refusal to grant them any real power), and demanded the dissolution of the present Parliament and the annual election of Parliament in the future. Members of the future Parliament would not have the right to

legislate on matters affecting freedom of conscience or to conscript into the army. A special article (18) prohibited the future Parliament from 'abolishing property, levelling men's Estats, or making all things common'. Among the economic demands, along with the abolition of monopolies, excise and tithes, Parliament was also required 'to keep people from begging and beggery, in so fruitful a Nation' and to condemn recent enclosures on fens and other common land, or permit their retention only in those cases where it was beneficial exclusively or mainly to the poor. Several articles were devoted to the reform of the law and the courts in order to make them equally accessible to all. Finally, one of the concluding articles contained a demand that Charles I be brought to trial for 'all the abundance of innocent blood that hath bin spilt...'<sup>70</sup> As the republican nature of the political demands was, at the time, in striking contradiction to the efforts being made by Parliament to reach an agreement as quickly as possible with the King on the conditions of his return to the throne, the Petition was ignored by the House of Commons.

Nonetheless, the Levellers' efforts over almost two years to propagate democratic ideas had not been wholly in vain—they had prepared the social and, to a considerable degree, also the juridical basis for the establishment of a republican system in the country in the form of a unicameral Parliament. In this lies their historical achievement.

The role played by the Leveller party in the political life of the country began to increase significantly from the autumn of 1648. Given the royalist mood of the Presbyterian majority in the House of Commons, the 'silken Independents' led by Cromwell, relying on the army, drew closer to their recent enemies, the Levellers, whose republican views now proved exactly appropriate to the situation. In fact, the 'silken Independents' had begun to use the Leveller tactic in the spring of 1648, when the threat of a second civil war had appeared. In order to restore unity in the army, the Military Council in Windsor had declared in April, 1648, that Charles I was to be brought to trial for heinous offences against God and the nation. At the time, however, the army was far from being of one mind in its attitude to the King. The Officers' Council convened by Fairfax at the beginning of November, 1648 came out against handing Charles I over for trial. They suggested

that the army act as an 'intermediary' between the King and the Parliament. Lilburne wrote to Cromwell that 'God had caused him to understand the principles of a just government, under which the glory of God may shine forth by an equal distribution unto all men'.<sup>71</sup>

In reply, Cromwell proposed a meeting in order to find a mutually acceptable form of post-war government.

This meeting was held in a London tavern. The main orators on the Leveller side were Lilburne and John Wildman. The Independents were represented by Colonels Titchburn and White, Dr. Parker and others. The Independents insisted that the King must be beheaded and Parliament, if not dissolved, then at least 'purged'. Lilburne objected that, although the King was proven a guilty man by his deeds, 'the army also had couzened us the last year, and fallen from all their Promises and Declarations, and therefore could not rationally any more be trusted by us without good cautions and security'.<sup>72</sup> 'It was to the people's interest to keep up one Tyrant to balance another, till we certainly knew what that Tyrant that pretended fairest would give us as our Freedoms'.<sup>73</sup> If the King were beheaded, the Parliament purged, then all government would devolve upon the Army, to be executed according to 'their wills and Swords'. Lilburne thus foresaw where Cromwell was inclining in the given situation. If such were the outcome, Lilburne warned, 'our slavery for [the] future ... might probably be greater than ever it was in the King's time'.<sup>74</sup> He then concluded that the Agreement of the People should first be adopted in order to exclude the possibility of tyranny. Although the 'gentlemen Independents' were somewhat indignant at the charges made against them and the fears expressed in their regard, *the power and influence of the Levellers was then at its height*, and Cromwell was in too great a need of their support for his plans to break with them. Moreover, there also existed the danger that the Presbyterians might seize the initiative in trying to attract the Levellers onto their side. Therefore the Independents agreed reluctantly to create a mixed commission — four representatives from each side — to draw up a new draft of the Agreement of the People. These included four representatives of the Independents in Parliament; four representatives of the Independents (religious) from London; four representatives of the army officers and, finally, four representatives of the Levellers

(Lilburne, Walwyn, Petty and Wildman). Lilburne was again the leader of the Leveller delegation. The decision reached by the commission met the Levellers' demands: it was decided that the new Agreement of the People would be put before the entire country for approval. In the meantime, Ireton—the 'Alpha and Omega' of the army, as Lilburne termed him—published his version of the government of the country under the title 'A Remonstrance'. The main difference between his project and that of the Levellers was that it presupposed first of all the trial of the King, and then the discussion of a new constitution. As we have seen, the Levellers' proposition reversed this order.

However, even as the Levellers were continuing the discussion, the army was brought into action. On 24 November it reached Windsor on its way to London. A further meeting between the Levellers and the Independents in Windsor did not bring the two sides any closer to an agreement. The main disagreements, according to Lilburne, were caused by Ireton's attempt to limit freedom of conscience by granting Parliament the right of coercion in this area. The Levellers, on the other hand, insisted that present and future Parliaments be forbidden to legislate in this area, as freedom of conscience was the inherent right of the free man. The Levellers broke off negotiations and returned to London. However, as the army was preparing to march into the capital, the Levellers were very necessary as allies, and Ireton, it seems, sent Colonel Harrison, who belonged to the Millenarians and was known for his sectarian sympathies, to see Lilburne with a view to persuading the latter to return to the negotiating table. As a result, the Levellers proposed that a new commission be appointed to draw up the definitive version of the Agreement of the People. The commission was to represent: Parliament, the army, the Independents, the Levellers and even the Presbyterians. While the commission was engaged in verbal haggling at Windsor, the army entered London, and Parliament was subjected to 'Pride's Purge'. In other words, the army had seized actual power, concealed by the 'fig leaf' of a Parliament whose House of Commons was composed only of a 'rump' obedient to that army. At that critical moment the Levellers were neutralized by Ireton's cunning. Discussion of the Agreement dragged on. The formulation of the article on freedom of conscience became the main stumbling block. It is worth

recalling here that the Putney conference also 'stumbled' over one article—the article on universal male suffrage proposed by the Levellers. Finally Lilburne accepted a compromise for the sake of the acceptance of the Agreement as a whole. However, at the end of such a difficult road disillusionment awaited him. The draft Agreement drawn up by the commission was not handed to the army regiments nor sent out to the counties, but was passed on to the Officers' Council for examination, and there it was amended. The victory went not to the honest but politically inexperienced Lilburne, but to Ireton, in Lilburne's eyes 'the cunningest of Machiavilians'.<sup>75</sup> It became apparent that the gentlemen Independents had been engaged in a political game with the Levellers in order to neutralize them, at least temporarily. When the purpose of this tactic became manifest, Lilburne published a letter addressed to all his countrymen, together with the draft Agreement of the People under the title 'Foundations of Freedom; or, an Agreement of the People'. Yet again deceived in his hopes, Lilburne withdrew from public activity for a while. For their part, the officers published their own version of the Agreement, and handed it in to the House of Commons on 20 January, 1649. The main difference between the Levellers' version of the Agreement and that of the officers can be summed up as follows: 1) the Levellers saw the people as the permanent bearer of supreme power in the country. For the officers, this power was embodied in Parliament. 2) In religious matters, the contradiction between the two drafts was the difference between total and restricted religious toleration. Thanks to the Levellers' compliancy, the two Agreements virtually coincided on all the remaining questions of the government of the country, including on the question of suffrage. This was accorded to men aged 21 and over who were not receiving poor relief, were not hired servants and who paid taxes for the benefit of the poor. Thus the Independents had effectively abandoned their earlier demand for a minimum property qualification of freehold to the value of 40 shillings a year in the country, or the status of a full member of a town corporation. For their part, the Levellers had agreed to a property qualification insofar as a tax for the benefit of the poor presupposed that the tax-payer enjoyed a certain level of income. In short, the Independents, by engaging the Levellers in a deliberately complicated game called



'drafting the Agreement of the People', had won the time they needed to organize the trial and execution of the King. When that was done, they simply took off the mask of 'ally' to become the Levellers' avowed enemies.

What distinguished the approach of the Levellers and the grandees to the procedure of adopting a constitutional document? Lilburne considered it just and rational that everyone should have the opportunity to judge as to the justice of this document and to express his views on its content. This procedure was dictated not only by mistrust of the existing Parliament, but also by the fact that the Levellers, true to their constitutional views, considered the Agreement to be the draft for a written constitution whose juridical force, therefore, came from the voice of the people who had unanimously approved it. In the conditions of mid-17th century England this was, of course, political utopia, an example of the conversion of an abstract political theory into an instrument of practical policy. For their part, the officers, on presenting the Agreement before Parliament, not only did not appeal to the people, not only displayed unexpected 'respect' for the power of Parliament, so unceremoniously ignored by that same army when the grandees found it necessary, but carried through a pure formality, remaining manifestly indifferent to the fate of the document thereafter. The actual policy of the day as conducted by Cromwell and his supporters was as far removed from the content of this document as were the interests of the propertied classes from those of the urban and rural masses experiencing the harshest need. Meanwhile Charles I was tried and publicly executed. Typically, Lilburne refused the invitation to be a member of the supreme court specially created for this purpose. His opposition to this action by the grandees was not, of course, in any way an indication of monarchist sentiments, but was dictated exclusively by the conviction that it was politically premature. Until national approval of the Agreement of the People gave the country a democratic and constitutional system, it was better politically that the forces which represented (each in its own way) the threat of tyranny—the King, the Parliament and the army—should counter-balance each other. Now, however, when Cromwell and the army had begun to exercise as much control over Parliament 'as any schoolmaster had over his boys',<sup>76</sup> and Cromwell had organized the trial and execution of the

King, there was the very real danger of unrestricted tyranny by the grandees. This was why Lilburne denied the lawfulness of the trial of the King, since there no longer existed in the country (following Pride's Purge) an independent constitutional power. Moreover, there was no longer any 'lawful' judicial authority in the name of which anyone could be tried. If this was so, then judges who passed the death sentence were 'mere murderers' who should be hanged, since their sentence was, in the given circumstances, without any judicial force. This was also true of the judges who had passed the death sentence against Charles I. While there is no legitimate authority in the country, that is, an authority approved by the people, then whatever crimes the King might have committed, no one had the authority to sit in judgement on him. If this was so, then those who had accused him of murders were themselves murderers.

It is clear that, although Lilburne's fears later proved justified, his thinking was hampered by abstract legalism. A truly amazing combination: a revolutionary who bases himself on traditional constitutional law (which he himself is rejecting). Nothing could be more characteristic of the early revolutionary thinking of an ideologist of the democratic masses!

Although Lilburne had determined that he would not 'engage in any publick contests' without 'the extraordinary necessity'<sup>77</sup> 'being like an old weatherbeaten ship that would be faine be in some harbour of ease and rest',<sup>78</sup> he nonetheless took up residence too close to Parliament (in Southwark) to leave politics altogether. The 'rump' of the Long Parliament, completely under Cromwell's power and composed of no more than 90 members of the House of Commons (as opposed to 490 members in November, 1640), began the work of setting up the organs of government. On 6 February, the House of Lords was abolished as 'useless and dangerous'. On 7 February, its fate was shared by the monarchy as 'unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the Liberty, Safety, and publick Interest of the People of this Nation'.<sup>79</sup> On 13 February the State Council was created, with Cromwell and his trusted associates as members. As Lilburne had feared, the 'rump' and the State Council were merely a cover for the dictatorship of the grandees. He himself turned down the offer of a post on the grounds that he did not wish to lend his name

to 'so unjust and illegal a fabrick as ... an everlasting Parliament purged twice by force of Arms'.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, he did not wish to live on means provided by unjustly collected taxes. 'I could not with freeness of my own spirit live upon the sweat of poor people's brows, by a large salary for my place ... (now their trades are gone, their estates spent for the intended recovering of their freedoms) ... and a famine come upon some parts of the land, and thousands ready to starve'.<sup>81</sup>

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The creation of a republic in England was undoubtedly a notable event in the history of the English revolution. However, the fact that it happened not as a result of implementing the Agreement of the People, but by ignoring it (the officers' draft Agreement, passed on to the 'rump' for discussion, was never considered, but put to one side and forgotten), not only made Lilburne cautious, but placed him in open opposition to it. It was a republic which retained all the attributes of monarchical government, only without a king. Lilburne could no longer remain a passive observer of the deception being practised, and despite his earlier decision, returned to political activity.

On 26 February, 1649, Lilburne appeared at the bar of the House of Commons with his pamphlet 'Englands New Chains Discovered'.<sup>82</sup>

Before examining the content of this pamphlet, however, let us take a brief look at the position of the mass of the population in England. As a result of two civil wars, the economy had been seriously damaged. In addition to the direct destruction of material resources (fields trampled, livestock seized, homes destroyed), in many regions the internal and external economic links had been shattered. This last had a particularly serious effect on the main branch of industry—cloth manufacture. In the cloth-manufacturing centres, above all in the south-western counties, there was mass unemployment due to the difficulty of selling the product on the external market. To this mass unemployment in the towns and manufacturing regions was added the pitiful condition of agriculture. Here the consequences of war proved particularly destructive. In addition, bad harvests

between 1646 and 1649 had led to a sharp rise in prices. In 1648 the average price for wheat was double that for the five years between 1641 and 1645, and the price of meat had increased by 50% during the same period. To the high price of grain were added the consequences of billeting, conscription and requisitioning, and also the extraordinary taxation, which placed a heavy burden on the population. In addition to the so-called monthly tax to maintain the army, bitter complaints were provoked by the indirect excise tax, a tax on many essential products, including food. Complaints and threats from the masses came from all parts of the country to London. 'Oh, you Members of Parliament, and rich men in the City, that are at ease and drink Wine in Bowls ... you that grind our faces, and flay off our skins, Will no man amongst you regard ... our faces black with Sorrow and Famine?.. What then are your ruffling Silks and Velvets, and your glittering Gold and Silver laces? Are they not the sweat of our brows, and the wants of our backs and bellies?'<sup>83</sup>

To the discontent of the mass of the population was added, in the spring of 1649, acute dissatisfaction in the army. The execution of the King and the creation of a republic had not, contrary to the hopes of the radically-minded elements, brought the desired goals any nearer. The ordinary soldiers had still not been paid their arrears, they were indignant at the continuation of billeting (that is, board and lodging in private houses free of charge), which set the population against the army. Nothing had been done to provide for the poor, the tithe had been retained, as had the system of law and the courts. Discontent in the army was so widespread that the top command forbade private meetings of soldiers and officers. Civilians were not permitted to enter the army camp; the soldiers could present petitions only through their officers. Lilburne described this new situation as follows: 'And thus after these fair blossoms of hopeful liberty, breaks forth this bitter fruit, of the vilest and basest bondage that ever English men groan'd under'.<sup>84</sup> In these circumstances, the author of 'Englands New Chains Discovered' demanded to know what had happened to that freedom for which the people had risen up in battle against the King, and which had been acquired at such a cost. This was followed by a list of the first actions undertaken by the new republic of the In-

dependents, which could not be viewed as anything other than a mockery of the concept of a republic. The Ordinance it had issued on printing continued the suppression of freedom of speech and the press; the supreme court had replaced the traditional judicial inquiry and trial by jury; in place of freedom of conscience they had government control, and in place of judicial reform—the introduction of new taxes for bringing legal charges. Imprisonment for debt was also continued. Moreover, in addition to this new kind of freedom there had been the hasty creation of the State Council, which had been granted supreme power. ‘They dealing with us,’ Lilburne continued in his pamphlet, ‘as the Bishops of old did with the honest Puritan,... to so small an account are the people brought, even while they are flattered with notions of being the Original of all just power.’ His conclusion is that in place of the expected freedom the people find themselves wearing new chains. Finally, his pamphlet contained a list of the complaints characteristic of Leveller pamphlets (‘Tythes,... Excise and Customs, Those secret thieves and Robbers, Drainers of the poor and middle sort of People,... all Monopolizing Companies of Marchants, the hinderers and decayers of Clothing and Cloth-working’),<sup>85</sup> and the demand that, amongst other things, the existing House of Commons and the State Council be dissolved, and that arrears to army widows be paid, etc.

On 1 March, in violation of the prohibition, five soldiers handed in a petition to Fairfax and the Officers’ Council, in protest against restriction of the soldiers’ freedom of assembly and petition. The petitioners declared that they numbered eight and that they had been involved in creating ‘the new chains of England’. They were seized immediately and handed over to a court martial. This was followed by shameful public punishment and dismissal from the army. On 21 March a pamphlet written in their name was published under the title ‘The Hunting of the Foxes ... by five small beagles’. Nominally the authorship was ascribed to the five soldiers dismissed from the army. In fact it would seem that it was written by Overton. Seeing the essence of the conflict which had marked English history in 1647-1648 as the perennial conflict between good and evil, the authors ‘identified’ the cause of the soldiers with the first, and that of their hunters with the second. The grantees always viewed the soldiers as hired slaves. Now

Parliament had also been turned into the representative of Cromwell, Ireton and Harrison. 'We were ruled before by King, Lords and Commons; now by a General, Court Martial and Commons; and we pray you, what is the difference?'<sup>86</sup> The pamphlet ended with an appeal to the House of Commons to support the demands in 'Englands New Chains Discovered'.

On 24 March, Lilburne presented 'The Second Part of Englands New Chains' in the House of Commons, together with a 'mass petition' with thousands of signatures in support of the programme set out by Lilburne. In the second part of 'Englands New Chains', however, Lilburne committed a manifest inconsistency: at the beginning of the pamphlet he attacked the 'rump' of the Long Parliament for lack of will and slavish obedience to the general and his associates, but in the conclusion he demanded that it 'bridle' the grandees and prepare the conditions necessary for its own dissolution and the implementation of the democratic Agreement of the People. However, the author saw his main purpose as being to expose the self-exaltation of Cromwell, who had finally attained, by means of the creation of the State Council, that power to which he had long aspired. Now, when Cromwell was but one step from the throne, the only hope, in Lilburne's view, was the fact that 'they have already lost the Affections of all People'.<sup>87</sup> Therefore the Levellers were in a position, by enlightening the people and winning their support, to oblige Parliament to take urgent and necessary steps. As was to be expected, the grandees saw in Lilburne's pamphlet a threat to the regime as dangerous as the one from the right, from the Royalists and Presbyterians.

On 27 March, that is, three days after Lilburne had presented his 'Second Part of Englands New Chains' in Parliament, the House of Commons declared the authors guilty of treason. The following morning the Leveller leaders—Lilburne, Walwyn, Overton and Thomas Prince—were arrested and taken to the State Council. Bradshaw, the chairman of the Council, and his colleagues found themselves simultaneously in the role of judicial investigators and judges.

The first question put to Lilburne was: 'What was Lilburne's part in this recent scandalous pamphlet?' As was his custom in such situations, Lilburne first refused to

remove his hat, and then, instead of answering the question, spoke at length on the Council's lack of judicial authority. If Parliament had given it such authority, it had no lawful basis. To this Bradshawe replied that, in this particular case, the Council was not acting as a judicial tribunal, but as a judicial investigation. Asked a second time about his involvement in the composition of the pamphlet, Lilburne refused to answer, as otherwise he would 'betray the Liberties of England'. At the conclusion of the investigation he declared: 'But Sir, This I will say to you, my late Actions have not bin done in a hole, or a corner, but ... in the face of the sun, before hundreds and some thousands of people; and therefore why ask you me any questions? Go to those that have heard me, and seen me, and it is possible you may find some hundreds of witnesses to tell you what I have said and done; for I hate holes and corners: My late Actions need *no covers nor hidings, they have bin more honest than so*, and I am not sorry for what I have done, for *I did look well about me before I did what I did, and I am ready to lay down my life to justifie what I have done; and so much in answer to your question*'.<sup>88</sup> When he had been removed outside the Council chambers, he heard Cromwell's voice on the other side of the door shouting: 'I tell you, you have no other way to deal with these men, but to break them in pieces ... if you do not break them they will break you'.<sup>89</sup>

On the following day, Lilburne, Walwyn, Overton and Prince were imprisoned in the Tower. Everything that happened to them from that moment on was vividly set out in that part of the pamphlet 'The Picture of the Council of State' which was written by Lilburne. The arrest of the leaders of the Leveller party prompted the many thousands of its members and supporters to take action. We have already mentioned the fact that there were organized Leveller groups in most of the counties, the link between them being maintained by a network of representatives who visited local Leveller groups from time to time to direct their activities. There were quite close contacts between the London Levellers and the newly-elected agitators. This explains the mass character of the reaction to the arrest of Lilburne and his colleagues. On 2 April, 1649, a petition with ten thousand signatures was handed in to Parliament by a delegation of eighty. The petition read: 'No man be censured, or condemned, or molested, but for

the breach of some law first made, and published to the people, whereby is avoided that uncertainty and hourly hazard that otherwise every man is liable unto both in respect of his estate, liberty and life'.<sup>90</sup> Two weeks later a petition analogous in content was again handed in to Parliament, but this also yielded no result. On 23 April a crowd of women handed in to Parliament a 'Petition of divers wel-affected Women' in which they expressed their solidarity with the Leveller cause. This was the first time in the history of England that women had taken independent political action demanding that their voice be heard. Finally, a soldiers' petition was drawn up in support of the arrested Levellers.

Nor were the prisoners themselves inactive. On 14 April they published 'A Manifestation' by Lilburne, Walwyn, Prince and Overton (written by Walwyn) in which they set out the quintessence of the Leveller political philosophy. It read: 'Since no man is born for himself only, but obliged by the Laws of Nature ... of Christianity ... and of Publick Societie and Government, to employ our endeavours for the advancement of a communitive Happinesse, of equal concernment to others as our selves; here have we ... laboured with much weaknesse indeed, but with integrity of heart, to produce out of the Common Calamities, such a proportion of Freedom and good to the Nation, as might somewhat compensate its many grievances and lasting sufferings...'<sup>91</sup> At the same time, Lilburne and his comrades denied the rumours and accusations, clearly being deliberately circulated, to the effect that they were agents of the King and Queen, or Jesuits, or atheists. However, that which frightened not only major property owners, but even the mass of medium and small-scale property owners away from the Levellers was the belief that they were seeking a 'levelling of estates' and a 'community of property'. Defending themselves against such slanderous rumours, the Levellers declared that any attempt to abolish private property by law would be 'most injurious, unlesse there did precede an universall assent thereunto from all and every one of the People. Nor doe we, under favour, judge it within the Power of a Representative it selfe, because although their power is supreme, yet it is but deputative and of trust; and consequently must be restrained expresly or tacitely, to some particular essential as well to the Peoples safety and freedom as to



the present Government'. As to common property, the early Christians practised it voluntarily, and not by coercion. In conclusion they stated: 'We profess therefore that we never had it in our thoughts to level mens estates'. Insofar as the demand for 'common consent' was a theoretical principle, justifying any public innovation, the Levellers, as practical politicians expressing the interests of small-scale property owners, used it for their own 'self-defence': '...it being the utmost of our aime that the Commonwealth be reduced to such a passe, that every man may with as much security as may be enjoy his propriety'.<sup>92</sup> There can be not the slightest doubt that this proposition most nearly expressed the essence of Lilburne's social philosophy. Equality (in the political and judicial sense), independent capacity for activity (economic independence) and, finally, on this basis, independence (freedom) in individual expression of conscience and will, were the prime constituent principles of human society, and therefore a model for the most accurate assessment of the structure of society and the state system as a whole. It is not difficult to appreciate that the idea of individualism in ownership is the core of such a social philosophy.

In Lilburne's ideology, the individual has no 'hereditary' status; his landownership, as also his property status, is not attached to any social indicators. The only factor which can distinguish one individual from another is the fact of finding himself on one side or the other of that boundary which separates the individual who has retained the material basis which permits him to manifest his 'inherent freedom', that is, his independent expression of his will, and the individual who has lost this basis.

Further on the authors of the 'Manifestation' deny the rumours spread by the grandees that the Levellers were in favour of 'anarchy', that they were 'atheists' and, finally, that they were guided by personal resentment and hatred, etc. *The deeper became the conflict between the Levellers and the grandees, the more frequently the grandees resorted to slander to deprive their opponents of the support of the people*, who were not very skilled in the finer nuances of political and religious phraseology. It is therefore not surprising that the Leveller ideologists, obliged to refute the accusations launched against them, brought together for virtually the first time their views on the main social and

political issues of the day and formulated them in 'definitive' form.

On 1 May, 1649, the third and final version of the Agreement of the People, entitled 'An Agreement of the Free People of England. Tendered as a Peace-Offering to this distressed Nation. By Lieutenant Colonel John Lilburne, Master William Walwyn, Master Thomas Prince, and Master Richard Overton, Prisoners in the Tower of London, May the 1, 1649' was published with the purpose of letting everyone know who the Levellers were, and the goal they sought to achieve. This document was, in effect, a democratic alternative to the constitutional government of the republic set up by the Independents in 1649, and is the last and most complete exposition of the Leveller programme in the revolution.

The document takes as its starting-point the republican system installed in the country, and a unicameral Parliament. Its aim is to destroy the arbitrary power of the top army officers and, in general, *to establish limits to power of any kind in the country.*

The supreme power in England was vested in the House of Commons with 400 members. At the same time, this power was seen as being only temporarily delegated by the people, who were the fount of sovereignty. This final version of the Agreement of the People gave the right to vote to men who had reached 21 years of age, who were not receiving poor relief and not employed in the service of others. Considerable attention was devoted to defining the spheres in which the individual enjoyed inalienable rights. As was to be expected, one of the first among them was freedom of conscience. (Although the political rights of Catholics and foreigners were restricted, this being explained not so much by their religious convictions, as by their acknowledgement of the Pope as the supreme authority in church matters, a consideration political rather than purely religious.) Particular emphasis was laid on the fact that Parliament was forbidden to legislate on questions of property. 'We therefore agree and declare, that it shall not be in the power of any Representative, in any wise, to render up, or give, or take away any part of this Agreement, nor level mens Estates, destroy Propriety, or make all things common...' <sup>93</sup> It is worth noting that equal stress is laid upon the inviolability of the Agreement, and the inviolability of private property.

If we summarize the content of the document under consideration, we cannot but notice that it reflected characteristic features of Lilburne's somewhat contradictory political thinking, in particular the combination of democratic republicanism and antiquated legalism. The arguments presented in support of this essentially revolutionary project for the government of the country were based on the laws of England's monarchical past, producing a pure anachronism. Such, however, is the characteristic feature of the revolutionary ideology of the 17th and 18th centuries as a whole. Another characteristic feature of Lilburne's political thinking was the utopian nature of the means by which the Agreement of the People was to be implemented. The legalism of his thinking enabled him to become the leader of a truly popular movement, and the struggle he and his associates waged was not in vain. The publication of this last version of the Agreement was perfectly timed. For the first time in several years the Leveller movement in the country revealed itself to be truly popular, well organized and, most importantly, able to move from words to political action. Lilburne himself later described his own part in mobilizing mass support for the Agreement in 1648. From the Tower he appealed to his supporters: 'Write to your friends in every county in England to choose out from amongst themselves and send up some agents to you (two, at least, from each county, with money in their pockets to bear their charges) to consider with your culled and chosen Agents of some effectual course speedily to be taken for settling of the principles thereof (as that only within an earthly government can make you happy).'<sup>94</sup>

As in the spring of 1647 it was again the army which found itself at the hub of the movement in support of the Agreement. This time, however, the movement in the army erupted in open revolt as the result of the actions of several dozen soldiers from Whalley's regiment, stationed in London. Led by Lockyer, they seized the regimental standard and barricaded themselves inside the building, demanding the payment of their arrears. The incident ended with the appearance of 15 soldiers before a military tribunal, which sentenced their twenty-three year old leader, Robert Lockyer, to be shot. His funeral became the occasion of mass protest. Thousands of soldiers marched in a column ahead of the coffin, draped in black,

and Lockyer's horse was led along behind, followed by several thousand civilian Levellers dressed in black and wearing the grey-green Leveller emblem. The peak of the Leveller demonstrations came in May, 1649, when army units stationed in Oxfordshire took up arms in the name of the Agreement.

It was disunity in the ranks of the rebels which enabled Cromwell and Fairfax to suppress the rebellion within a few days. In a manifesto entitled 'Englands Standard Advanced', the leader of the army revolt, Captain Thompson, wrote: 'We declare ... we will endeavor the absolute settlement of this distracted Nation, upon that form and method, by way of an Agreement of the people.'<sup>95</sup> (Therefore let it be known to everyone that the rebels would prefer to die than to live in slavery.)

During the weeks which followed the soldiers' revolt, the popularity of Lilburne reached its height. On 8 June, he published one of his best pamphlets, 'The Legall Fundamental Liberties', in which he linked more clearly than ever before his campaign for the adoption of the Agreement with the interests of 'the poor and middle sort of People'. Given the widening political divide between the upper and lower strata of English society, Lilburne's reference to 'the poor and middle sort of People' as those most interested in seeing the Agreement adopted is of particular relevance. It reveals that the Leveller leaders had finally ceased to place any hopes on Cromwell or Parliament and had, albeit rather belatedly, decided to appeal directly to those sections of the population in which they saw their last source of support. These they now called upon for direct action.

In the summer of 1649, disaster struck the Lilburne family—his wife and three of his children caught smallpox during an epidemic in London. With Henry Marten's support, he requested permission to leave the Tower during the day, and his request was granted.

The fight to save the lives of his wife and children, who had also suffered persecution under every regime as the family of a 'dangerous conspirator', had a tragic end. Two sons, 'the greater part of his earthly delight in this world'<sup>96</sup> as he himself put it, died, while his wife and daughter only just survived. It might seem that grief should have broken Lilburne's spirit, but that was not the character of a man who believed he was appointed to defend the cause of

truth and justice. On 10 August he published the pamphlet 'An Impeachment of High Treason against Oliver Cromwell and his son-in-law Henry Ireton', in which he went further in his attacks on the general than ever before. 'The present contest of the present dissembling interest of Independents for the people's liberties in general is no more but Self in the highest, and to set up the false Saint and most desperate apostate murderer and traitor Oliver Cromwell by a pretended election of his mercenary soldiers, under the false name of the godly interest, to be King of England...' <sup>97</sup> Lilburne was also involved in the publication in August of the pamphlet 'An Outcry of the Youngmen and Apprentices of London', which sharply criticized the methods used by the authorities to suppress the Leveller rebellions in May, and voiced support for the Agreement. This appeal, also addressed to the soldiers, played its part in the revolt by a regiment in Oxford at the beginning of September. The soldiers demanded of their officers that they give their support to the Agreement, re-establish the Army Council and pay the arrears. Meeting with refusal, the insurgents arrested the officers, elected 'agents', and occupied the munition stores. However, the large forces sent against them by London were not required. In most cases the insurgents surrendered and their leaders were seized. In connection with this mutiny in Oxford, Parliament listened to a report on the 'Outcry': on 19 September, on the basis of a resolution to bring the authors to trial, the State Council demanded that Lilburne be returned to the Tower and kept in strict isolation. This time it was decided to hold a full trial on the basis of the Treason Act, passed by Parliament on 14 May, 1649. The members of the court were nominated and the Guildhall was chosen as the place of trial, to be guarded by troops.

The life of 'honest John' was hanging by a thread. Recognizing the danger, and also influenced by the persuasions of his wife, exhausted by her husband's repeated imprisonments and the tragedy that had befallen them (the death of two sons), Lilburne appealed to Parliament to permit him to leave the country on condition that he would be provided with material support during his exile. This request, however, went unanswered.

Lilburne published a similar proposal in the pamphlet 'The Innocent Man's Second Proffer', according to which not only Lilburne, but all those who wished to go with him,

would depart for the West Indies. John Lilburne was defended by his brother, Colonel Robert Lilburne, who was devoted to Cromwell and asked only that his brother's trial be delayed.

Lilburne's wife, however, encountered only insult and heartlessness from Parliament when she went to hand in his petition, and realized that Cromwell and his associates had decided to destroy her husband once and for all.

In tears, hysterical with desperation, she pleaded with her husband to submit, to profess allegiance, anything to preserve his life. This time, the unswerving 'free-born' John gave way to his wife's pleas: he wrote to the speaker of the House requesting that his trial be adjourned.

The first hearing of the court began on 24 October. The best lawyers had been recruited for the prosecution. Of the thirty-nine commissars who had been appointed to hear the case, one was the Attorney General, Edmund Prideaux, and another was the famous lawyer, Judge Jermin. The trial lasted three days, and was attended by many of Lilburne's supporters and friends.

At the trial Lilburne opted for the only possible tactic to pursue in these circumstances: not to deny the competence of the court, but 'catch' the judges in infringements of the investigation procedure, and prove that there was insufficient evidence for the charge to be brought. When asked by the judge if he pleaded guilty, Lilburne replied: 'This is my answer, that I am not guilty of any of the treasons in manner or form, as they are there laid down in that indictment'.<sup>98</sup> In the name of 'the liberties of England', he asked the court to appoint a lawyer for his defence. His request was turned down twice. Addressing the jury, Lilburne declared: 'As a free-born Englishman, and as a true Christian that now stands in the sight and presence of God, with an upright heart and conscience ... I cast my life and the lives of all honest freemen of England into the hands of God and His gracious protection, and into the case and conscience of my honest jury and fellow citizens, who I again declare by the law of England are the conservators and sole judges of my life, having inherent in them alone the judicial power of the law... You judges that sit there being no more,... but ciphers to pronounce the sentence of their clerks, to say Amen to them, being at the best, in your Original, but the Norman Conquerors (intruders); And therefore you gentlemen of the jury, my sole

judges, the keepers of my life; at whose hands the Lord will require my blood, in case you leave any part of my indictment ... and therefore I desire you to know your power and consider your duty both to God, to me, to your own selves, and to your country;... the Lord God Omnipotent, the Governor of Heaven and Earth, and all things therein contained, go along with you, give counsell and direct you, to do that which is just and for His glory'.<sup>99</sup>

As Lilburne finished his speech, there were cries of approval and sympathy in the court. From all sides came the shout: 'Amen! Amen!'. At five o'clock in the afternoon the members of the jury retired to consult. An hour later they returned, and a brief 'not guilty' was heard in the silent courtroom. There followed an unbelievable scene. Tense from waiting, 'the multitude of people in the Hall, for joy, of the prisoner's acquittal, gave such a glad and unanimous shout, as is believed was never heard in Guildhall, which lasted for about half an hour without intermission. The prisoner stood silent at the Bar, rather more sad in his countenance than he was before'.<sup>100</sup> The joy of the sympathetic crowd flowed out far beyond Guildhall and filled the streets of the capital. As one contemporary commented: 'Extraordinary were the acclamations for the prisoner's deliverance, as the like hath not been seen in England, which acclamations and loud rejoicing expressions went quite through the streets with him to the very gates of the Tower, and for joy the people caused that night abundance of bonfires to be made all up and down the streets'.<sup>101</sup> A medal was struck to commemorate the event.

However, it was only on 8 November that Lilburne and his colleagues were released, and the gates of the Tower opened before them. The Leveller movement, the focus of which in the months of May and September, 1649, had been the army, was now suppressed. The republic of the Independents, based on an army which became increasingly an army of hired campaigners, proved an even more merciless enemy than the Presbyterian Parliament of 1647. In such a situation, what awaited such an inflexible champion of popular freedom as Lilburne? From early youth his life had become a continuous chain of battles against social injustice. Although morally he always won the victory in these battles, he paid each time with harsh physical suffering. At the same time, the level of social awareness

among the mass of the population, for whose rights and freedoms he was prepared to lay his head on the block, was such that, while sympathizing with him as a martyr, and admiring him as a fighter, they were capable only of following him in a crowd from prison to Parliament, then from Parliament to prison, and bringing petitions in his defence to Parliament, but were incapable of any more independent action, and, unfortunately, could produce nothing more convincing in the political struggle. Moreover, the very ideology of the Levellers—and above all of Lilburne himself—with their belief in the abstract power of law and naive appeal to it, left them unable to summon or inspire the crowd to anything further.

As a result, Lilburne usually found himself facing the enemy alone. His family lacked not only a permanent place of residence, but even any reliable income. Lilburne spent all his resources on the publication of his numerous pamphlets addressed to the people, and on providing for himself while in prison. His wife, Elizabeth, who had so selflessly shared all his miseries and at critical moments had courageously fought to save his life and freedom, who had shared life in the army with him during the war, and the prison cell in peacetime, finally convinced him to undertake some 'peaceful' occupation, and leave his enemies to their fate. And Lilburne consented. For eighteen months he did not publish a single word. He moved with his family from Southwark to the City, where he became a full member of the corporation, and took up the trade of soap-boiler. In December, 1649, during elections to the Common Council, he was elected a member, in spite of the fact that not long before this, the enemies of the Levellers had been able to pass an Act which forbade those who had been in prison, or who had been subject to sequestering for assisting the King or taking part in royalist uprisings in 1648, from voting at elections or occupying any public post. As this list reveals, it applied not only to Royalists, but also to Leveller leaders. However, in order to take his place on the Council, Lilburne, like all those who took up public office, had to sign the following declaration: 'I do here declare and promise that I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England as the same is now established, without a King or House of Lords'.<sup>102</sup>



Lilburne, of course, would not have been Lilburne if he had gone against his own convictions. He wanted to introduce into the text an amendment to the effect that 'by the Commonwealth he understood "all the good and legal people of England", and not the present Parliament, Council of State, or Council of the Army'.<sup>103</sup> Indignant at such wilfulness, the authorities in London complained to Parliament, which responded with exceptional speed to such a situation. The election of Lilburne to the Common Council was declared illegal. It was only with great difficulty that Lilburne's wife restrained him from taking action, and Lilburne continued to work as a soap-boiler, a trade which clearly suited the powers-that-be more than his involvement in politics. On Cromwell's request, Parliament paid Lilburne the long-awaited compensation for the injury he had suffered during the monarchy, taking the resources from sequestered estates. When Cromwell returned to the capital after his victory over the Scots (at the battle of Worcester), a grateful Lilburne went to see him.

The compensation he had finally received after such a long delay had come exactly when most needed: he bought a house, left his unpleasant work as a soap-boiler and, making use of his knowledge of the law acquired over the long years he had spent in prison, he began to practise as a legal consultant. Although he was refused entry into the lawyers' corporation (whose members continued to see him as a poor parvenu), Lilburne nonetheless became well-known for his successful conduct of legal cases (more exactly, he took cases in which the manifestly arbitrary action of the wealthy and powerful stung his conscience). One such case was the one brought by tenants of the manor of Epworth (Lancashire), who had lost 8 thousand acres of common pasture, enclosed for the benefit of a company of fens drainers after the fens had been drained. In November, 1651, Lilburne published the pamphlet 'The Case of the Tenants of the Mannor of Epworth'.

However, another case in which Lilburne became involved—the case of Sir Arthur Haselrig, one of the most cynical embezzlers of funds from estates confiscated from delinquents—ended less happily for Lilburne. He did not content himself with merely publishing a pamphlet exposing Haselrig, but presented a petition to Parliament in December, 1651, in which he set out all the charges against Haselrig. This action was all the more rash as not a few

members of Parliament used Haselrig's services to engage in machinations with confiscated estates. Not surprisingly, Parliament found Lilburne's petition false, malicious and scandalous. Lilburne was fined £7,000 for publishing his pamphlet, prior to handing in his petition to Parliament, sentenced to perpetual banishment and threatened with death as a felon if he did not leave England within thirty days. In 1659, following Lilburne's death, Parliament reversed this sentence as illegal.

Parliament's harsh sentence was, of course, not directed against Lilburne the legal consultant, but against that Lilburne whom they still saw as 'a dangerous conspirator', a disturber of the peace, who would not let the plunderers, protected by their parliamentary mandate, peacefully carry on their shameless intrigues. Finally, the fact that Cromwell permitted this arbitrary action must be linked to suspicions that the Levellers had royalist connections. Coke, a royalist agent detained in 1651, declared that he had seen letters by the Levellers which confirmed these suspicions. He asserted that 'John Lilburne had a hand in the letters'.<sup>104</sup> On top of this, the speaker of the House refused to give the sentenced Lilburne permission to leave the country, trying to ensure that the allotted time would expire and thus it would be possible to execute him without further investigation or trial.

On 30 January, 1652, Lilburne managed to get on board a ship sailing to Holland. He was followed by two agents in the reconnaissance service of the republic. At the time, Holland had become a centre of royalist conspiracies against the republic, and therefore the country had a rather dense network of spies who informed London about every step taken by prominent members of the royalist movement. It is not difficult to imagine the ambivalent position in which the exiled 'honest John' found himself. On the one hand, the Royalists were convinced that the expulsion of Lilburne from England was simply a clever move by the London authorities to facilitate Lilburne's penetration into royalist circles to acquire information. On the other hand, some members of the royalist movement abroad linked serious plans for the restoration of the monarchy with Lilburne. Sir Edward Hyde, the future Earl of Clarendon, placed particular hopes on the Levellers in this respect. His thinking was simple. As the Levellers were the irreconcilable enemies of despotism and

supporters of the 'fundamental laws' of the country, they were the most likely allies of those who supported the restoration of the lawful King, and therefore, of fundamental laws. If the Levellers were promised elementary religious tolerance and certain legal reforms, the observation of the letter of the law and frequent sittings of Parliament, they could be drawn onto the side of the overthrown dynasty.

In London it was reported that Lilburne had dined with the Duke of Buckingham. This seemed dangerous. However, as Lilburne himself later showed in court, their conversation touched only upon the personal affairs of the Duke, who had discussed with him his plans to return to his native land. Whatever the case may be, Lilburne's close acquaintance with certain moderate representatives of the Royalists abroad gave agents of the republic grounds to spy on him and to compose fantastic reports to send back to London. One such report, for example, was that, for £10,000, Lilburne had agreed to overthrow Cromwell, Parliament, the State Council, and restore the Stuart monarchy in the person of Charles II.

In reality, Lilburne was experiencing material difficulties in Holland, and dangers which threatened his life. He could easily have become the victim of murderers sent by one of the rival royalist groups. He wrote: 'I have been forced in a land of strangers, for many months together to borrow here every penny that buys me bread'.<sup>105</sup>

No less difficult was the position of his wife, who had remained in London. She was obliged to sell or mortgage most of their property in order to support herself and the children. The children were again seriously ill, and she herself, finally worn out, feared that John would again engage in a verbal war with the London authorities. In May, 1653, she visited Lilburne in exile, cheering him with the news that Cromwell had dissolved the 'rump'. Yet again Lilburne believed that Cromwell had finally decided to follow his advice, and the following day he wrote a letter to him. He expressed the hope that Cromwell would establish in England 'real liberty and freedom, founded upon the true principles of reason, common equity, justice...'<sup>106</sup> He even ventured to ask Cromwell for permission to return to England, 'giving as security for his good conduct his faithful and beloved friends'.<sup>107</sup>

From that moment on, Lilburne knew no peace, addressing similar appeals first to Cromwell, then to the

State Council. In order to be closer to his native land, he left Holland and moved to France, waiting in Calais for a reply from Cromwell. London, however, was clearly in no hurry to reply, and Lilburne, still not receiving the expected permission, decided to take a desperate step (from which his wife tried vainly to dissuade him). He returned to London of his own accord, informing Cromwell that he intended to request the new Parliament to revoke the sentence passed by the 'rump'.

In the meanwhile, Cromwell was facing both the hostility of the members of the dissolved 'rump' and the conspiracies of the Royalists, and his position was far too insecure for him to risk such a 'weakness' as permitting Lilburne to remain free, and able to form yet another source of active opposition. The new Small Parliament met on 4 July and, contrary to Lilburne's expectations, did not reverse the decision on his banishment. The position became truly tragic. The State Council had already issued a warrant for Lilburne's arrest as a man who had violated the parliamentary decision on his banishment.

On 13 July he appeared in front of a jury who, in order to find him guilty and thus condemn him to death, needed only to establish one fact and one alone—that in front of them was that same John Lilburne referred to in the act of banishment. A positive answer by the jury to that simple question would mean that the death penalty automatically came into force. How did 'free-born' John conduct himself in this situation? The natural and available tactic was to draw out the judicial investigation as far as possible. Only this left the hope that his numerous London supporters would be able to intervene in the course of the trial.

Again he judged correctly. As soon as it became known in the outskirts of London that Lilburne faced the possibility of the death sentence, action was taken. On the very first day of the trial the courtroom was packed and the building itself was surrounded by a dense crowd which passed round a broadsheet: 'And what shall then honest John Lilburne die? Threescore thousand will know the reason why'.<sup>108</sup> Petitions in his defence poured into Parliament. Numerous pamphlets appeared in the city justifying Lilburne's actions. One witness to these events tells us: 'It is not to be imagined how much esteem he hath got, only for vindicating the laws and liberties against the usurpations of this time'.<sup>109</sup> Cromwell himself declared that the

execution of Lilburne would give rise to 20 thousand set upon vengeance. The government confirmed this warning by its own actions: three regiments of infantry and cavalry were stationed by St James Palace. While the court was in session, the noise of the crowd in the courtroom and on the adjacent square was such that it drowned the voices of the judges and the defendant. The very presence in and around the courtroom of a crowd sympathetic to his case inspired Lilburne sufficiently for him to warn, when interrupted: '...if you will be so audacious and unjust in the face of this great auditory of people, to deny me, and rob me of all the rules of justice and right, and will forcibly stop my mouth,... I will cry out, and appeal to all the people that hear me this day, how that my lord-mayor, and his court, by violence rob me of my birthright'.<sup>110</sup>

Such a situation in the course of criminal proceedings was, of course, only possible in a revolutionary period, when the voice of the crowd could be heard, loud and menacing. It is obvious that it was only in a situation such as this that, instead of giving a direct answer to the question of whether or not he was that John Lilburne referred to in the parliamentary act which banished him, 'honest John' could demand that the question of the very legality of the act be examined. Lilburne addressed all his replies and speeches not to the judges who were questioning him, but to the crowd in the courtroom. Thus it was that he did not speak but shouted, sometimes hysterically, and the courtroom replied with deafening approval and indignation at the behaviour of the judges. When the judges sent for a detachment of soldiers to restore order in the court, Lilburne addressed them as follows: 'What are you? Are you Englishmen and true English souldiers raised for maintenance and defence of the ancient Rights and Liberties of England ... how is it you enter the place and legal Courts of Justice, with horse and swords drawn?'<sup>111</sup>

Finally the altercations between the judges and the defendant ended with the judges giving way, and Lilburne was promised that the legality of the parliamentary act would be examined. This was on 16 July. The next sitting of the court was set for 10 August. In the meantime, Lilburne's supporters continued to hand in to Parliament petitions in his defence (29 July—the women; 2 August—the London apprentices), despite the rumours spread against him by the authorities about his alleged links with

Royalists during his period abroad. When the court resumed its sitting, several hundred armed supporters of Lilburne in and around the courtroom were ready to snatch him from the hands of the authorities should he be found guilty.

Lilburne himself continued his tactic of altercation with the judges in order to drag out the proceedings. The effects of strain, however, began to make themselves felt. He had been resisting the legal machine for a month, just a hair's breadth from the scaffold. On 20 August he was allowed to make his final speech. The main argument he advanced in his defence was Cromwell's dissolution of the 'rump', from which he had concluded that, as it was the 'rump' Parliament which had sentenced him, his acquittal should follow the recognition of the fact that the 'rump' Parliament was guilty of injustice and arbitrary action. If that Parliament was legal, and its government honest, then it was Cromwell who should be brought to trial as the main organizer of its dissolution.

The London authorities were well aware that the political situation demanded maximum caution as the condemnation of Lilburne could be the spark which would ignite a fire of unpredictable proportions. Such was the opinion of the contemporary whose words were quoted above. On this basis he concluded that Lilburne would most probably be imprisoned in solitary confinement rather than executed. In his last address to the members of the jury, Lilburne declared: 'If I die on Monday, may not the Parliament on Tuesday pass such a sentence against every one ... and upon your wives and children; and then upon the rest of the city; and then upon the whole of the country of Middlesex;... and so by degrees there be no people to inhabit England but them selves'.<sup>112</sup> A few hours later the jury returned with the verdict not guilty of any crime deserving the death penalty. Cromwell was expecting the death sentence, and therefore had troops ready to suppress a popular revolt. They proved unnecessary. The acquittal of Lilburne was met with shouts of joy by huge crowds of Londoners packing the streets of the capital. The rejoicing was so universal that even the soldiers joined in. This was the greatest, but also the last triumph of John Lilburne the fighter. The verdict of not guilty did not, however, lead to his immediate release. On the instructions of

Parliament, he remained in the Tower for another six months in strict isolation.

The subsequent fate of Lilburne was determined by the fact that the plots against Cromwell's life uncovered during this period were often linked to the names of Leveller leaders. One of the most dangerous conspirators proved to be a former army agitator and close friend of Lilburne, Edward Sexby, who had established contacts with Royalists. In the spring of 1657, Sexby published the pamphlet 'Killing No Murder' in which he justified attempts to assassinate Cromwell. He was captured and imprisoned in the Tower, where he died in 1658. In these circumstances the State Council decided to remove Lilburne from the Tower, since even imprisoned there he could become the focus of opposition. The remote castle of Mount Orgueil, at the eastern end of the Isle of Jersey, was chosen as his new place of incarceration.

From March, 1654, Lilburne became a prisoner of Mount Orgueil. Solitary confinement, hunger and the damp of the stone prison soon undermined his physical and mental health. On 3 July, 1655, the governor of the castle, Colonel Gibbon, advised that Lilburne be transferred to a prison closer to his home, where his friends could visit him. On 31 July, Lilburne's wife, Elizabeth, asked Cromwell to release her husband, attributing the sharpness of his words to the sufferings that had befallen him. She expressed her belief that if he were released, Lilburne would feel calmer and be grateful, and offered her own life as a guarantee that he would not disturb the peace of the realm. In October, Lilburne came to England on the condition that he would remain in Dover castle. Here he underwent a new 'conversion'. He joined the Society of Friends, the Quakers, in whose teaching he had found 'peace'. At the time in question, however, both the Quakers and Lilburne were far from the principle of not opposing evil with violence. For example, when Cromwell agreed to release Lilburne on condition that he would sign an undertaking not to involve himself, by word or deed, in public affairs, Lilburne refused. His fading mind continued to refuse to recognize the existing order.

Having received a limited freedom—the right to leave the castle during the day, Lilburne visited Quaker meetings in the town and nearby villages. His new acquaintances persuaded him that he had 'erred', that his 'quarrel-

some', 'tempestuous' and 'cavilling' character was preventing him from hearing the voice of God, that his path of salvation was blocked by 'pride'. Such arguments did not soothe his broken spirit. In December, 1655, he wrote to his wife that 'I am at present become dead',<sup>13</sup> and asked her to give up her 'many toilings and journeyings' to secure his 'outward liberty'.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Elizabeth asked him to sign the undertaking required of him, but he stubbornly refused.

In May, 1656, Lilburne published the pamphlet 'The Resurrection of John Lilburne now a prisoner in Dover Castle', in which he acknowledged his 'conversion' to a new faith. He wrote: '...I am already dead, or crucified, to the very occasions, and real grounds of all outward wars,... and ... therefore I confidently now believe, I shall never hereafter be an user of a temporall sword more, nor a joyner with those that so do'.<sup>15</sup> Temporarily released on his sworn word, Lilburne rejoined his family, but not for long. On 29 August, 1657, broken mentally and physically, he died in the arms of his devoted wife, companion and defender, Elizabeth. About 400 people silently followed his coffin. It is unlikely, however, that any of those who watched this sad procession realized that 'honest John' had gone to 'eternal life' not only in the next world, but here on earth, in the memory of his people, whose rights and freedoms he had defended for decades with such unexampled courage and extraordinary talent as a pamphleteer, orator and fighter.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, Temple Smith, London, 1972, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>*Freedom in Arms. A Selection of Leveller Writings*. Ed. by A.L. Morton, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1975, p. 331.

<sup>3</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne. The Leveller. A Christian Democrat*, Lindsay Drummond Ltd., London, 1947, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>Bastwick's 'Letany' is printed in Somer's Tracts, 5, p. 407 (M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 41).

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 68.



- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 70.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>12</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 58.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 102.
- <sup>15</sup>Cited from: H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, Stanford University Press, California, 1961.
- <sup>16</sup>Cited from: M.A. Gibbs, *John Lilburne...*, p. 103.
- <sup>17</sup>*Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution 1638-1647*. Ed. by William Haller. Vol. III, Columbia University Press, New York, 1933, p. 183.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 184-185.
- <sup>19</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 124.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 127, 128.
- <sup>23</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 135.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 141.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 137, 138.
- <sup>26</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 132.
- <sup>27</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, pp. 171-172.
- <sup>28</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 141.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 142.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup>Joseph Frank, *The Levellers. A History of the Writings of Three Seventeenth-Century Social Democrats: John Lilburne, Richard Overton, William Walwyn*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1955, p. 79.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>33</sup>*Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, Vol. III, p. 351.
- <sup>34</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 152.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 153.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 161.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 177.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 178.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 165.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-166.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 166-167.
- <sup>44</sup>Joseph Frank, *The Levellers...*, p. 121.
- <sup>45</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 181.
- <sup>46</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 181.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 181-182.
- <sup>48</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 188.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 188-189.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

- <sup>51</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, pp. 184-185.
- <sup>52</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 192.
- <sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 194.
- <sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195.
- <sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 191.
- <sup>57</sup>*The Levellers in the English Revolution*. Ed. by J.E. Aylmer, Thames and Hudson, London, 1975, pp. 89-90.
- <sup>58</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 202.
- <sup>59</sup>*The Levellers in the English Revolution*, p. 106.
- <sup>60</sup>*Leveller Manifestoes of the Puritan Revolution*. Ed. by Don M. Wolfe, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1944, pp. 263, 267, 270.
- <sup>61</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 220.
- <sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 221.
- <sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 227.
- <sup>64</sup>Joseph Frank, *The Levellers...*, p. 155.
- <sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157.
- <sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 241.
- <sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 244.
- <sup>69</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, pp. 231-232.
- <sup>70</sup>*The Levellers in the English Revolution*, pp. 132, 136, 137.
- <sup>71</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, pp. 232-233.
- <sup>72</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 251.
- <sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 255.
- <sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 258.
- <sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 263.
- <sup>78</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 249.
- <sup>79</sup>*The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, Vol. II, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>80</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 264.
- <sup>81</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 250.
- <sup>82</sup>Its full title was 'Englands New Chains Discovered: Or, The serious apprehensions of a part of the People, in behalf of the Commonwealth'.
- <sup>83</sup>*The Leveller Tracts 1647-1653*. Ed. by William Haller and Godfrey Davies, Columbia University Press, New York, 1944, p. 126.
- <sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 164.
- <sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 162, 159.
- <sup>86</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 266.
- <sup>87</sup>*The Leveller Tracts...*, p. 184.
- <sup>88</sup>Joseph Frank, *The Levellers...*, p. 197.
- <sup>89</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 258.
- <sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 259.
- <sup>91</sup>*The Levellers in the English Revolution*, pp. 151-152.

- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-154.  
<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 167.  
<sup>94</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 274.  
<sup>95</sup>*The Leveller Tracts...*, p. 28.  
<sup>96</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, pp. 272-273.  
<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 273.  
<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 285.  
<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 293.  
<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 294.  
<sup>101</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 295.  
<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 296.  
<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 301.  
<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 309.  
<sup>106</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 310.  
<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 316.  
<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 315.  
<sup>110</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, pp. 328-329.  
<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 330.  
<sup>112</sup>M.A. Gibb, *John Lilburne...*, p. 320.  
<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 340.  
<sup>114</sup>Pauline Gregg, *Free-Born John...*, p. 344.  
<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

## *Chapter Four*

### **GERRARD WINSTANLEY—THINKER, REVOLUTIONARY AND PROPHET**

Gerrard Winstanley occupies a special place among the colourful figures who appeared on the scene of English history in the stormy 1640's when, in the words of contemporaries, 'the world was turned upside down'. Having appeared on that scene for only a brief moment—from the spring of 1649 to the spring of 1650—he left an indelible imprint on the memory of not only his own nation, but that of the whole of civilized mankind. In that sense the most destitute masses of Stuart England, the paupers and hired labourers stripped of their land and expelled from their native homes, the craftsmen and peasants impoverished by the civil wars, were fortunate: in their name the voice of a true thinker and revolutionary, fearless in the conviction of the righteousness of the cause for which he had raised the banner of battle, rang out across England. It was indeed an amazing time, a time when the genius of the ordinary people, oppressed, silenced and trampled underfoot for centuries by the powerful of this world, shone, if only for a moment, in all its inimitable purity and nobility of spirit. Of the thinkers and publicists of this extraordinary period, Winstanley alone penetrated with such depth and historical insight into the very essence of the conflict which underlay the democratic stage of the revolution of the 1640's and the danger that the 1649 republic would become (indeed, in the event did become) merely the prelude to the restoration of the monarchy.

Who was this amazing man?

The details of the biography of Winstanley, this outstanding ideologist of the deprived of this world, will prob-

ably remain unknown. Nor need we look far for the explanation: people from this milieu left few traces in the official papers of their age, and rarely attracted the attention of those contemporaries with whom they came into contact. They belonged to 'the crowd', which swallowed up and obliterated the individuality of any who belonged to it. Despite the originality and depth of their content, or perhaps because of it, the works of Winstanley passed virtually unnoticed by his contemporaries, and were submerged in the general current of the pamphlet literature of those years, which revealed their authors' lack of formal scholarship, and which was therefore dismissed by the learned pharisees and pedants as 'idle talk' and the 'outpourings' of self-appointed 'mechanic preachers'.

As for the activities of Winstanley, these attracted the attention of the central authorities and were mentioned in the London press for only a very brief period, generating amazement and fear by their extraordinary nature, but finally leading either to indifference (as something insignificant) or open hostility (as something menacing by virtue of being unfamiliar and enigmatic).

Unfortunately for us, Winstanley's works contain very little that is autobiographical; and it is not surprising, as he himself saw the fact of taking up the pen as a wholly unexpected act of Providence, which had chosen to reveal to him the true cause of events. Therefore he did not consider it necessary to say anything about himself or his life, since what he was communicating to the reader had been 'revealed' to him, and not 'discovered' by him. Here, however, is what little is known to modern scholarship.

Gerrard Winstanley was born in 1609 in the parish of Wigan in Lancashire. His father, Edward Winstanley, was a linen and wool trader who would appear to have been relatively successful, as in the year of his death (1639), his name in the parish records was prefaced by 'Master', which testifies to his material prosperity. Nothing whatsoever is known about Gerrard's childhood and youth. Very probably his education was limited to the local elementary school. Certainly his name is not found in the archives of either Oxford or Cambridge. This, however, does not exclude but, on the contrary, presupposes study at home over many years. It is well known that it was the custom in Puritan families to read and discuss, mainly the bible and pious literature, but not only that. They also read

other edifying historical works. Although the absence, with rare exceptions, of references to sources in Winstanley's works makes it difficult (if not impossible) to establish the material he had read, there are happy exceptions which enable us to conclude that he had read, for example, the 'Institutes' of Coke and the Statutes of the 14th century. There are grounds for assuming that he knew More's 'Utopia' and was apparently familiar with the essays of Francis Bacon. There are general references (without specific names) to classical authors, the inclusion of 'historical excursions', and equally unspecified allusions to Magna Carta. One thing is certain—we have before us an example of the self-taught man whose mind was stirred to action by the very unusual events of the times in which he lived, men's achievements and, last but not least, the hard lessons of his own life. In accord with the beliefs of his day, Winstanley, in his first pamphlet entitled 'The Myserie of God' (May, 1648), addresses 'my beloved countrymen of the County of Lancaster' and expresses what sounds almost like an apology for having taken up the pen: 'Do not be surprised to see my name here, for God does not always choose the learned in whom to manifest Himself.'<sup>1</sup>

We find Winstanley, at the age of twenty, in London, serving as an apprentice in a merchant company belonging to Sarah Gater. On concluding his seven-year apprenticeship (1637), Winstanley became a full member, or freeman, of the Merchant Taylors. The next information about him is found in the parish archives of London, dated 1640—the banns for his marriage to Susan King, the daughter of William King, a London apothecary. The record of the marriage itself is missing due to the loss of this section of the archives during a fire. Thereafter it would seem that Winstanley conducted a very modest cloth trading business for several years. Over a period of two and a half years his turnover amounted to just a little more than £300.

However, as his later unsuccessful attempts to devote himself to trade reveal, he was not suited to this kind of occupation. On learning more about this amazing man, we find the explanation for this aspect of his character. In 1643 Winstanley found himself bankrupt and a pauper, as we discover from his own statements made when, many years later (1660), he faced a lawsuit for the recovery of £114 which he had borrowed from one Richard Aldworth.

Winstanley did not deny this fact, but explained that 'by reason of the badness of the tymes'<sup>2</sup> resulting from the civil wars, he had been obliged to cease trading and to leave London: 'Your oratour further knoweth that in the year of the Lord 1643, when the late unhappie wars in England were violent, Your oratour left off his trading with the said Richard Aldworth and with all other persons by reason of the badness of the tymes.'

There was nothing left for Winstanley to do but avail himself of the invitation of friends and settle in the parish of Cobham in Surrey, where he stayed, with short breaks, until 1660. Here he had the opportunity not only to observe but, as a farm labourer in charge of another's livestock, experience for himself all the horror of poverty and humiliation which was the lot of the pauper in Stuart England, supporting himself either by hiring himself out as a servant or, lacking permanent employment, living by occasional work and begging. As Winstanley noted, they had to endure 'hard language, hungry belly, to be despised' and imprisoned.<sup>3</sup> Later, comparing these lessons of life and his own childhood, Winstanley will write: 'I must either beg or work for day wages, which I was never brought up to...'<sup>4</sup> He termed himself a servant.

From 1643 right up to the spring of 1648 Winstanley again disappears from the record. Only with his first pamphlets, published in the spring and summer of 1648, are we able to make some assessment of the direction and nature of his spiritual quest. For those who had lived through the revolution, and in particular for those of Winstanley's own social milieu, this was the search in religious experience, be it collective or individual, for answers to the most urgent questions raised by life around them. From the occasional remarks in Winstanley's pamphlets (and around twenty are known to us), we learn that previously he had been 'a blind Professor and a strict goer to Church, as they call it',<sup>5</sup> which may mean that he had belonged to one of the Independent congregations. It would seem that he then joined the Baptists, who underwent the rite of a second baptism (ordinance of dipping). However, by the time he began to write, Winstanley had already become disillusioned not only with the Baptists, but with a number of radical sects, while nonetheless absorbing not a few elements of their outlook (in particular the beliefs of the Familists). Winstanley commented, not without irony,

that since he had had the 'inward light' of the truth revealed to him 'my former acquaintance now begin to be afraid of me, and call me a blasphemer, and a man of errors, and look upon me as a man of another world'.<sup>6</sup> By 1648 Winstanley had come to the conclusion that *true faith was incompatible with any forms of an organized church*, and that it could be attained only in the personal, deeply internal experience of the believer himself.

It is worth noting the difference in the meaning of the term 'experience' as used by Lilburne and Winstanley. Whereas Lilburne, a practical politician, constantly dramatized his own political (that is, external) 'secular' experience in order to reveal to the whole of the free-born nation the position of one of its sons, and therefore unfailingly provided a detailed and systematic description of his own sufferings, be it under the king or under the Long Parliament, Winstanley, who was above all a thinker, never permitted himself to describe the details of his own 'external' life, even less raise them to the level of a decisive argument supporting his views. The one exception is in the pamphlet 'The Saints Paradise', in which Winstanley describes in brief, general terms what may happen to any man, and which in reality had happened to him: 'siknesse, frowns of friends, hatred of men, losses of his estate by fire, water, being cheated by the false spirited men, death of his cattle, or many such like casualties'.<sup>7</sup> Consequently the idea of 'experience' came to have for him one meaning only—inner 'revelation', 'light', 'voices' which may be seen or heard only by the one who destroys the devils within: hypocrisy, lies, envy, meanness and self-love—and is therefore able to discover God within himself. In order to achieve this, however, one needs to have the appropriate social experience, to open one's heart to that which moves the sea of men. He contrasts those who preach 'by the book' with those who confirm their testimony not with written words, the words of others, but with their own (internal) experience, an experience which, for Winstanley, includes not only 'inner revelation' but also what one has seen and heard, that is, the reality of life. Therefore we cannot agree with the opinion expressed by the English historian, David W. Petegorsky, that 'his political consciousness and maturity very definitely date from the end of 1648 or the beginning of 1649'.<sup>8</sup>



The philosophical cast of mind of Winstanley himself, the depth and intensity of his spiritual search, would naturally play a major role in arriving at such a different concept of experience and such a different attitude towards it. This, however, in no way means that religious mysticism was the motive force guiding Winstanley's activity when he became the ideologist and leader of the 'True Levellers', who appeared on the scene at the peak of the revolution. It seems to us that the explanation is to be sought in exactly the opposite direction. Even in the period of his most intense, mystically nuanced religious search, it was the social reality of England which motivated him: 'When the curse in flesh moves a man to oppresse or deceive his neighbours or to take away his rights and liberties, to beat or abuse him in any, kind reason moderates this wicked flesh.'<sup>9</sup> In other words, Winstanley's religious quest was simply the search for the theological basis for a socio-ethical interpretation of the bible or, if you will, for that way of expressing his social philosophy which would be more striking and convincing for his contemporaries.

### IN SEARCH OF A 'NEW GOSPEL'

As has already been mentioned, the spiritual development of Winstanley in his search for the 'New Gospel' is a phenomenon so unexpected and so extraordinary that it would seem fated to remain a mystery. Having been for seven years a silent witness of such unusual events as the development of a revolution, he instantly proved to be, on finally taking up the pen to tell the world his opinion of these events, a thinker of such depth and originality, and with such a gift for style, that he is generally acknowledged by all modern researchers to have risen rapidly to the level of such men of his own day as Milton, Hobbes and Harrington (the author of the political utopia 'Oceania'). The religious mysticism—typical of the ideologists of the radical sects of the day, the Anabaptists, Familists, Ranters, etc.—that marked his first pamphlets gave way in just a little over two years to an intellectual development which many could not have achieved in a lifetime, and which finally led to rationalism and pantheism, and close to ma-

terialism. Such a development deserves to be examined, if only in its most general features.

In the spring and early summer of 1648, Winstanley published two pamphlets in quick succession: the first—'The Mysterie of God Concerning the Whole Creation, Mankinde. To be made known to every man and woman, after seven dispensations and seasons of time are passed over'; and the second—'The Breaking of the Day of God'. These were followed by 'The Saints Paradise' (late summer, 1648), and 'Truth Lifting Up Its Head Above Scandals' (October, 1648).

Both in content, imagery and linguistic style these pamphlets undoubtedly belong to the popular religious literature of the day. There would be little to be gained from searching for any other written source of inspiration outside the bible. First, unlike many other religious mystics of the time, Winstanley did not adorn his work with the superficial show of scholarship, did not quote from either classical or contemporary authors. Moreover he points out more than once that the content of his work is drawn not from books written by men, that his ideas come not from human wisdom but from the 'voice from above' heard within himself. The conviction that the day of redemption is close at hand, that salvation cannot be achieved through the medium of a visible church nor any external rites, the rejection of the doctrine of the election of a few in favour of belief in the universal salvation of all the 'children of God', the assertion that Christ is present in every man—all these elements, in their modified variants, constituted the basis of belief of the religious mystics of the day. However, here also Winstanley was out of the ordinary. Let us then turn to his early pamphlets and examine their content.

The author is apparently concentrating on the triple relationship 'God—the world—man' traditional for Christian thinkers of all ages, and particularly in this period. This time, however, examination of these three categories was subordinated to finding an answer to that question which was fundamental to such authors, namely the origins of the evil which dominated the world, and a path of salvation to follow for men and mankind. One of the most prominent English specialists in the intellectual history of the English revolution, Christopher Hill, wrote: 'We should read Winstanley as we read a poet, as we read William Blake, and as Winstanley himself read the Bible'.<sup>10</sup>

Winstanley read the bible as a socio-ethical allegory of man's earthly odyssey, the nature of his calling and the moral choice before him. Such an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures must, naturally, quickly lead to a break with all forms of Christian orthodoxy, the conversion of the bible into a precision instrument for remodelling human nature and, via this, for criticizing the existing order. Thus Winstanley believed that the events and prophecies in the bible—the fall, the death and resurrection of Christ, the promise of a 'second coming' and of 'salvation'—were no more than an allegory of what happens in the soul of each individual. However, even in those instances where Winstanley, paying his tribute to tradition, interprets these events historically, not only the characters of the Old Testament, but above all Christ, are simply men among men, and what happens to them is simply the story of what happens gradually to each man. In Winstanley's interpretation, the story of the fall of Adam is at one and the same time the story of the fall of the first man, and also an allegory of the moral drama which takes place in the soul of each individual facing the choice between good and evil, between God and the devil. 'We may see Adam every day before our eyes, walking up and down the street',<sup>11</sup> for the cause of Adam's fall, self-love, is still alive in Winstanley's contemporaries as it was in their distant ancestor. Thus also the story of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. This is not only the narrative of what happened once to the man who bore this name, but also an allegory for what happens in Winstanley's own day to the man who rejects the 'devil'. In other words, it is an allegory for spiritual rebirth, for the spiritual history of a man prepared to follow 'the light of justice'.

Thus the religiously coloured world outlook of Winstanley as it appears in the pamphlets of 1648 does away with the contradiction inherent in the theology of not only the Protestant churches, but also the majority of sects which had arisen on their basis but which deviated from them in one or other direction. This contradiction is abolished, on the one hand, by seeing divinity not as something external to the believer, existing apart from him, but as the spirit residing within him, and, on the other, by denying the external attributes of faith, which is now seen as the inner moral condition of the believer.

Winstanley does not ponder God or the devil apart from man. Hence all the consequences following from the link between the believer and God, or the devil, have for him an exclusively internal, spiritual significance, and for the world — an external, social significance. In other words, Winstanley is talking not only about 'inner knowledge of God' by the believer, but, above all, about the *presence of God within man as the sole place of His existence*. 'He that looks for a God outside himself, and worships a God at a distance, worships he knows not what.'<sup>12</sup> Is it not a form of idolatry to pray to something external? Then what is Winstanley's concept of 'God'? Although he resorts to the tradition of the Gospels, particularly in his early pamphlets, it is his allegorical interpretation and use of them which remains the decisive factor. The Three Persons, for example, are simply three names given to one and the same creator, whom Winstanley names sometimes metaphorically, sometimes following biblical tradition. In the first case God is 'The Sun of Justice', or 'The King of Righteousness' sitting on the throne within each man, judging and condemning 'the injustice of the flesh'. Finally, however, God is Reason (more precisely, the 'Spirit Reason' and 'pure Reason'), the creative power of nature.

'Pure Reason ... knits the whole creation together into oneness of life and moderation; every creature sweetly in love lending their hands to preserve each other...'<sup>13</sup> 'The Spirit reason doth not preserve the creature and destroy another, as many times mens reasonings doth, being blind by the imaginations of the flesh; but it hath a regard to the whole creation ... making every creature to be an upholder to his fellow...'<sup>14</sup>

Thus reason is the expression of the unity of the harmony and concord of men in society, and the unity of society and nature.

When Winstanley follows the biblical tradition, then this purely spiritual 'God' may be given the name of any of the three persons who compose him: Father, Jesus Christ or Holy Spirit. They are all simply other terms for one and the same spirit, the 'Sun of Justice'. In other words, in such cases the 'father' and the 'son' and the 'holy spirit' may appear as the 'King of Righteousness and Peace' within man. Of considerable interest is the meaning which Winstanley gives to the concepts of 'resurrection' and 'salvation'. The spirit, sent down by the 'creator' into the body of the his-

torical Christ is 'God Himself made man', thus underlining that Jesus is simply a man who decided to live 'in the light of Reason'. However, that 'power of God' which resided within the 'historical' Christ finally comes down on all men and women, conquers the devil 'in every son and daughter of Adam'. At the same time, interpreting Christ allegorically, Winstanley comes to the following amazing conclusion: the 'perfect man', like Jesus, is 'a son of God', and all believers are his sons. In calling such 'perfect' people 'holy' (that is, people in whom the King of Righteousness rules entirely), Winstanley compares them to Christ. It is simply that the 'historical' Christ was the first person in whom the 'Father' dwelt 'in the flesh'. If this is so, however, the divinity of Christ merely symbolizes the divine essence of the spirit dwelling in every man. 'Jesus Christ ... is not a single man at a distance from you, but ... is the wisdom and power of the father, who spirits the whole creation, dwelling and ruling King of righteousness, in your very flesh'.<sup>15</sup> And again: 'Let me tell you that if you look for him under the notion of one single man after the flesh, to be your Saviour, you shall never, never taste salvation by him.'<sup>16</sup>

As other religious mystics of his day, Winstanley developed the doctrine of an eternal, spiritual gospel as against the outdated written gospel, a doctrine which goes back to the end of the 12th-beginning of the 13th centuries, and which is linked with the name of Joachim of Fiore, the abbot of a Benedictine monastery at Calabri (Italy). At a time when the official church taught that the revelation of Christ and the church founded upon it would last to the end of the world, that is, to the Second Coming, Joachim of Fiore distinguished three periods in sacred history according to the three persons of 'the one God': the 'Father'—the age of the Law; the 'Son'—the age of the written gospel, and the 'Holy Spirit'—the age of the eternal spiritual gospel, the truth of which would continue to the end of time. This is the age in which the church based on the written gospel will be replaced by a world governed by a holy spirit of truth more perfect than that of the new testament. Naturally, the question as to when this third age was to come was resolved differently in each case. To Joachim it seemed very close in the middle of the 13th century. For Winstanley in the 17th century it also seemed very close. The revolutionary events themselves convinced

him of this—the holy spirit had begun to fill the hearts of men, bringing them liberation from a yoke both internal (satanic) and external—the structure of a society based on greed and selfishness. This essentially mystical doctrine played, particularly in a revolutionary age, a major liberating role. Above all it denied the authority of the letter of the gospels and the power of the official church founded upon it. An important consequence was the clearly expressed anti-clericalism. Why is it, Winstanley asked, that the majority of people do not see in what their freedom consists? And he himself replied that the Stuart clergy continually preached their obscurantist principles, keeping people ignorant. They taught the poor to accept their poverty in this world, for they would enjoy their paradise in the next. But why, Winstanley asked, can we not enjoy paradise in this life, along with the clergy? The social essence of such preaching was revealed with amazing clarity by Winstanley himself, who said that while people turn their gaze towards the heavens hoping for paradise or fearing hell after death, they are blinded and prevented from recognizing their inherent rights, and what they need to do while they are still in this world. Winstanley rejected the doctrine of the fall, rendering redemption necessary. The fall is not the initial source of the evils of life on earth, but their consequence. The fall began with the establishment of relations based on the division of earthly goods into 'thine' and 'mine'. In place of this, Winstanley preached the doctrine of the initial sinlessness of man, and the belief, based on this, in 'universal salvation'. 'Every man shall be saved ... without exception'.<sup>17</sup> However, Winstanley clearly puts the main emphasis on salvation in this world, as he also does with the 'resurrection' from the dead, for a man may be 'dead', in the moral sense of the term, in this life while he remains under the power of the devil. For this reason, the final judgement—according to Winstanley—is not at all an event to be expected at the end of this world, for it is not an external but an internal event, that is, it takes place internally over a long period of time.

In conclusion it must be underlined once again that the divergence between Winstanley and traditional thinking in the interpretation of the 'promise' of salvation lies not only in the fact that, in his interpretation, it is universal, encompassing 'all God's children'. 'Jesus Christ,' wrote Winstan-

ley in his 'Mysterie of God', 'will dwell in the whole creation ... every man shall be saved ... without exception.' It also lies in the fact that he transforms this 'event' from one which determines the fate of a man in the next world into one which occurs during his life in this. The 'salvation' which the letter of the scripture proclaims will occur in this life, and will herald the liberation of mankind from the power of self-love. In this connection, an important aspect of the translation of faith into the language of social ethics is the image of the human soul as the arena of a battle between God and the devil, for the devil, like God, is not something external to man, but exists within him. If the devil, that is, the imagination of the flesh in man, has dominated for so long, it is only because man has not understood where God is to be found, as a result of which he has been deaf to His voice. Likewise he has not known that heaven and hell are not somewhere at a distance from him, but within him. In other words, what awaits man is an internal 'heaven' or 'hell', depending on whether the 'King of Righteousness' or the devil of self-love comes to reign in his soul. Thus the alpha and omega of faith, according to Winstanley, lies in the moral choice between good and evil, between self-love and love for the whole creation, in a choice which, in the past, was made by men who thought of their creature comforts, for the most part on the model of 'the first Adam'.

Times changed, however. The civil wars in England were, for Winstanley, the proof that 'the Father now is raising up a people to himself out of the dust'.<sup>18</sup>

If one inquires into the world outlook of Winstanley as it appears in the pamphlets of 1648, one cannot but notice the clearly increasing elements of rationalism in the two last (from among those published) pamphlets of that year, that is, in 'The Saints Paradise' and 'The Truth Raising Its Head', in comparison with the others. This increasing rationalism expressed itself not only in the fact that, as a rule, God was referred to not using the New Testament terms 'Father' and 'Son', but primarily by the word 'Reason' (for example: 'pure reason ... knits the whole creation together' we read in 'The Saints Paradise'. It is Reason who created all things and who governs 'creation'). It is also revealed in efforts to reformulate biblical tradition in the spirit of rationalism. These pamphlets reveal with increasing clarity the socio-ethical, purely secular implica-

tions of these efforts, and that Winstanley was turning to the rationalist tradition. Thus, in 'The Truth Raising Its Head' we read: 'Let Reason rule the man, and he dares not trespass against his fellow-creature, but will do as he would be done unto. For Reason tells him, Is thy neighbour hungry and naked today, do thou feed and clothe him; it may be thy case tomorrow, and then he will be ready to help thee.'<sup>19</sup> So 'reason' is the 'law of justice', the 'spirit of love', which should triumph in the heart of each man, and thus in his relations to his neighbour and within society.

### THE COMMUNIST REVELATION OF WINSTANLEY

The spiritual development of Winstanley, as reflected in the pamphlets of 1648, ended with the conversion of not only faith, but divinity itself, into reason—a socio-ethical principle embodied in the spirit of love and justice penetrating the whole of creation, and making men capable of living in the world in harmony with their neighbours. In the first pamphlet published in 1649, 'The New Law of Righteousness' (dated 28 January), this principle is revealed to be a manifestly communist demand: 'work and eat your bread together'. As Winstanley declares in chapter 8 of this pamphlet, he heard this call 'as I was in a trance not long since',<sup>20</sup> that is, in 'a state of mental abstraction from external things'. (The Oxford dictionary appears to confirm this interpretation, quoting 17th century examples of its use.) 'Likewise,' he goes on, 'I heard these Words Whoso-ever it is that labours in the Earth for any person or persons that lifts up themselves as Lords and Rulers over others, and that doth not look upon themselves as equal to others in the creation, the hand of the Lord shall be upon the labourer'.<sup>21</sup>

Taken overall, this pamphlet is distinguished by the secular nature of the ideas and, even in comparison with the later pamphlets of 1648, contains a completed and far more profound social philosophy born of the revolution of the 1640's. This raises the question of what had happened over such a short period. Could such an amazing change in the content of pamphlets written under one and the same



name be brought about only by the superhuman ability of Winstanley to identify and formulate revolutionary experience? While not denying the genius of this thinker 'from the people', we shall nonetheless be closer to the truth if we concede that we are seeing the full revelation by Winstanley of those ideas which had already taken shape in his mind when he first took up the pen. However, the form in which he expressed them was wholly and entirely dependent on the external, socio-political conditions in which he had to write. Naturally, during the period in which the second civil war was approaching and then broke out, mystical clothing was the most convenient attire in which to dress these ideas because it was the least dangerous. However, this war had only to end in the victory of Cromwell for Winstanley's writings to acquire a more rationalist tone and become more openly an expression of social criticism. Finally, after the trial and execution of King Charles I (Winstanley signed this pamphlet four days after the execution of the king), it was possible to remove at last this mystical clothing from the questions and answers which had long since 'burned him with fire', and to begin to speak in the language of a rationally thinking ideologist for the poorest people in England. Any other explanation for this apparently amazing phenomenon — the rapid, virtually lightning transformation of a religious mystic into a rationalist and pantheist — itself becomes a kind of modern mysticism, since one would then have to ascribe to Winstanley mental powers that would indeed be superhuman. It is most likely that the shift in emphasis in 'The New Law of Righteousness' to socio-political matters was determined to no small degree by the exceptionally difficult conditions suffered by the poor in the winter of 1648-1649, when a succession of poor harvests led to the price of bread and fuel going beyond the pocket of the poor man. Cold and hunger did their work — the death rate among the poor, particularly in London, rose sharply. This pamphlet was probably also influenced by the Leveller pamphlet 'Light Shining in Buckinghamshire', which appeared in December, 1648. Winstanley may, for example, have borrowed from this the concept of royal power applied to the lords of the manor, the theory of the Norman yoke, which explained this power as one established as a result of the Norman conquest, and a number of other concepts. However, none of this alters the conclusion that the key to un-

derstanding such a rapid change in the 'development' of Winstanley, his 'conversion' from mysticism to rationalism, lies nonetheless in the surging hope that, with the fall of the monarchy, it would be possible to re-organize the life of the people on more just foundations.

Here we are obliged to make a slight digression. Almost all historians (with a few exceptions), attracted to some degree or other by Winstanley's unusual personality, then fall captive either to his religious quest, seeing in this the guiding principle, the source of his social philosophy, or to his socio-utopian undertakings, which placed him at the head of the Leveller movement of the 'Diggers'. In both cases, however, the significance of the revolutionary exploit, both intellectual and socio-political, achieved by Winstanley during the revolution is not, in our opinion, correctly identified. In this context we can agree with the conclusion that in his religious and his socio-utopian views—if they are viewed separately—Winstanley was not as original as is sometimes supposed. As regards the former, he undoubtedly took a great deal from the mystical teachings of the radical sects of the 1640's (particularly the Familists). As regards such essentially socialist views as the rejection of private land ownership as the prerequisite and basis of a just social order, not to mention the demand that the poor be recognized as having the right to work the land and waste ground as common property so that they could feed themselves with the fruit of their labour, etc., etc., these had been voiced more than once in mass petitions and in pamphlets by the radically-minded Levellers before they were formulated and given profound supporting argument by Winstanley. We need only mention the anonymous pamphlet entitled 'Light Shining in Buckinghamshire', with its noteworthy subtitle 'A Discovery of the main ground; original cause of all the slavery in the world but chiefly in England; presented by way of a Declaration of many of the well-affected in that country to all their poor, oppressed country men of England...' All the data gives us the right to conclude that this pamphlet was composed under Leveller influence, but clearly by peasants (or people of peasant origins in the recent past at least). In this pamphlet, and especially in its sequel, we find not only a number of important demands typifying the peasant understanding of freedom and equality, including also the demands of the rural poor, but also arguments in support

of these demands which, in one form or another, will be repeated in the 'Digger' pamphlets by Winstanley in 1649: 'All men being alike privileged by birth, so all men were to enjoy the creatures alike without propertie one more than the other ... that is to say, no man was to lord or command over his own kind; neither to enclose the creatures to his own use to the impoverishing of his neighbours.'<sup>22</sup>

Yet if this is so, if Winstanley's religious quest and social philosophy contain not a little which chimes in with what had already been said by others speaking before or at the same time, then in what lies the originality of Winstanley as a thinker, why is he given, by common agreement, a prominent place in the history of the 1640's revolution, why, in the final analysis, does modern historical science see in him a great son of the English people, in no way inferior in the importance of his legacy to the originator of socialist utopias, Thomas More? It seems to us that all these questions can be answered quite briefly: Winstanley was able to create a well-ordered system of genuinely revolutionary ideology for the masses out of the chaotic accumulation of the radical ideas of his day: religious and secular, social and political, ethical and educational, thrown up in such quantity during the 1640's revolution. Objectively speaking, he proved equal to the task only because he alone among the thinkers and active figures in the revolutionary period identified in the position of the masses (above all the rural masses) not simply one of the social problems of the revolution — indeed, given the fact that the rural plebs constituted a major portion of the society of the day, one of the most vital issues. There were not a few such reformers and authors of various philanthropic projects both before and after Winstanley in the England of that period. The genius of Winstanley as a thinker revealed itself in the fact that he was not merely the author of another abstract, primitive-communist utopia, but saw in the position of the masses that socio-ethical principle which, formulated as a programme for the revolution in progress, could, if it were implemented, lead to the radical solution of the main problem for that revolution, namely the solution of the agrarian question in the interests of the peasantry as a class, the abolition of the landlord system. However, this aspect of the social programme of true Leveller ideology as formulated by Winstanley has passed almost unnoticed in subsequent historiography. The primi-

tive communist ideal preached by Winstanley during the revolution, and the very nature of the arguments used to substantiate it, have so absorbed the attention of researchers that the anti-feudal aspect of his agrarian programme has remained until recently unappreciated. True, it must be acknowledged that the link between these two aspects was profoundly contradictory. The aspirations of the peasant copyholders and the landless paupers were far from being the same. One cannot exclude the possibility that the 'communism' of the Diggers frightened away that section of the dependent copyholders who dreamed of owning the plot they worked. In other words, the fact that those preaching agrarian reform during the English revolution were not ideologists of the bourgeoisie but ideologists of the masses determined its failure from the outset. However, such was the characteristic feature of this revolution as determined by the alignment of the class forces involved in it.

It should be noted that in the New Law of Righteousness both these aspects are still sufficiently welded together, sufficiently inseparable, for the anti-feudal revolutionary programme to appear to be derived from a more specific question—the right of the poor to farm waste ground. Although the argumentation of this programme in the above-named pamphlet still remained apparently theological, the biblical phraseology merely concealed a fully rational process of reasoning. The constant replacement in this theology of the word 'God' by the word 'reason' meant that Winstanley had completed the process of translating biblical history into the description of specific cases involving specific people, thus allegorizing this history, that is, graphically describing the religious and socio-ethical experience of each individual. As a result, the events in the cosmic drama of the battle between good and evil, between God and the devil, the flesh and the spirit, are rendered amazingly *contemporary*, become the urgent reality of the day, above all because separate acts in this drama occur not outside the individual but within him. Thus, for example, Winstanley wrote of the fall: 'Doe not look beyond your selves to *Adam*, a man that died 6000 years agoe ... but look upon the *Adam* within your self.'<sup>23</sup> In the same way, other 'acts' in biblical history, such as the redemption and resurrection of Christ, the Last Judgement, are all acts in a spiritual drama taking place in the soul of each

man. Ultimately, 'faith according to the book' (that is, according to the letter of the bible) was replaced by faith based on individual experience, and in this experience, as Winstanley expressed it, 'the poorest man, that sees his maker, and lives in [his] light, though he could never read a letter in the book, dares throw the glove to al the humane learning in the world',<sup>24</sup> because he is speaking according to *inner* knowledge, and not the external. This lies behind the uncompromising anti-clericalism mentioned earlier. Indeed, of all the instruments keeping 'the people of God' in slavery to the external, really existing church, its clerics provoked his fiercest indignation (as, however, did lawyers). This is explained, first, by the fact that the experts of the 'external word', instructing according to the bible, 'teach for gain, and preach for hire, and fill people with division and confusion..., and they do this by the Authority of the governing power, by which they have engrossed the earth into their hands'.<sup>25</sup> Second, they are one of the main instruments by which mankind is held under the power of the 'king of unrighteousness'. Not for nothing does Christ declare these wise and learned to be very silly men, the most ignorant of all, blinde guides, Prophets that run before they be sent, and the great fooles of the world... and the Scribes and Pharisees that stand up to hinder Christ from rising...'

From this followed Winstanley's conviction that it was the poor, those who had been the most oppressed and downtrodden since the fall, who were called upon to point the way to the liberation of mankind from the evil which reigned in the world. Their very position in the world makes them the most able to hear the 'inner voice' of the Lord, drowned out in the hearts of the rich by the voice of 'the king of darkness' — greed and selfishness.

The events which were happening before his own eyes convinced Winstanley that 'the law of love' triumphs first of all in the hearts of the oppressed. 'The Father,' wrote Winstanley, 'now is rising up a people to himself out of the dust, that is out of the lowest and most despised sort of people, that are counted the dust of the earth, mankind, that are trod underfoot. In these and from these shall the Law of Righteousness break forth first'.<sup>26</sup>

It is precisely the poor and the despised in 'the kingdom of the devil' who are to show the world a model of compassion and love by man for man. The touchstone of

such a relationship is to be the form of property. What first attracts attention is the fact that Winstanley uses the term 'propriety' only for private property, that is property which divides the material world – and above all the earth which feeds us – into 'mine' and 'thine'. The emergence of this kind of property was a critical moment not only in the history of mankind, but in the history of creation as such. In the beginning man was governed by 'the spirit of justice and peace', and all that lived upon the earth was filled with peace and harmony. However, from the moment when man 'fell out of his Maker' and began to seek pleasure in 'outward objects', his lower nature, the imagination of the flesh, won the upper hand, giving rise to pride and envy, insatiable greed and harshness, self-love and deception. Man began to accumulate in his hands land, money, titles and power, the beginnings of particular interest in opposition to the common interest, in which 'this of mine' turned one part of mankind into lords who reigned over the other part. By means of laws which defended this private property, the owners denied access to the land to their fellows who were without it, obliging them to work for a miserly wage on land which the owners considered 'theirs'. The tyranny of the owners among mankind inflicted damage on the whole creation. Just as man had 'fallen out of his maker', the King of Righteousness, so creation fell out of man, and became hostile to him, and animals began to behave towards men as men behaved towards each other. In order to preserve himself, one man consumes another. Let them say what they will, argues Winstanley, but while those who rule are those who call the land their own, upholding this property of 'mine' and 'thine', the common people shall never be free.

Is it not true to say that, in comparison with Lilburne, Winstanley penetrated far more deeply into the essential nature of freedom? This interpretation of freedom from the position of the masses enabled him to discover the very basis of the division of society into classes, a basis which could not be seen by the small-scale independent producers in whose name Lilburne defended freedom.

For Winstanley, the preservation of the landowning system excluded the possibility of achieving freedom not only for the landless paupers, but for the entire mass of peasant copyholders. At present, he insisted repeatedly, mankind is under the power of the curse, and those living

according to the law of the 'king of darkness' consider it just that the rich, regardless of how they acquired their wealth—by just or unjust means—should be the rulers who reign over the poor, and that the poor should be the servants, even the slaves of the rich.

Those, however, who judge in the spirit of righteousness and reason recognize that men were created in order to be free, and not in order to be poor and the slave of another. 'The Kingdoms of the whole world must become the Kingdoms of the Lord Christ; and this the Nations are angry at; Therefore count it no strange thing,' declares Winstanley, 'to see wars and rumours of wars ... to see commotions of people every where like floods of water stirred up, ready to devour and overflow one another; To see Kings storme against the people; to see rich men and gentry most violent against the poor, oppressing them and treading them like mire in the street. Why all this anger? But because the man of flesh is to die, his day of judgement is come, he must give up the Kingdom and Government of the earth (man-kind) into the hand of his neighbour that is more righteous than he... *The poor shal inherit the earth.*'<sup>27</sup> Reason demands that each live on the earth in sufficiency, for the earth is 'a common livelihood' for all. The expression 'mine' and 'thine' shall be swallowed up, for all are to live as brothers, acting towards others as they wish others to act towards them.

Thus the thesis that land is the common treasury of all the children of God functions in Winstanley's social philosophy as the alpha and omega of his argument, used, first, to expound the just ideal of the future society and, second, to indicate a concrete programme for purging the English countryside of feudal dependence and exploitation. While Winstanley saw the realization of the first as depending on the spread of 'the light of truth' throughout the whole of mankind, he sought the realization of the second not only in word but also in deed. Let us take a brief look at the line of Winstanley's thinking in both cases. 'When this universal Law of equity rises up in every man and woman, then none shall lay claim to any creature, and say, This is mine and This is yours, This is my work, that is yours, but every one shall put their hands to till the earth and bring up cattle, and the blessing of the earth shall be common to all; when a man hath need of any corn for cattle, take from the next storehouse he meets with'.<sup>28</sup> This

is the meaning of the famous communist discovery made by Winstanley—'work together, eat bread together'. However, it must not be forgotten that the prerequisite is the recognition of the land as 'a Common Treasury'.

Such is the first and decisive condition for the liberation of the poor and downtrodden. All the tears caused by slavery will not cease until the land becomes the common treasury of those who work it. Then there will be no land-owners. The concept of 'a common treasury' cannot be conveyed by the term 'collective ownership', which for Winstanley had one meaning only—private appropriation. In the 'kingdom of Righteousness', there is only one Lord, the creator, while men—all, without exception—are granted free access to their common treasury, and thus the opportunity to support themselves with the fruits of their own labour. As regards his own compatriots, Winstanley wrote: 'All the men and women in *England* are al children of this Land, and the earth is the Lords, not particular mens that claim a proper interest in it above others.'<sup>29</sup> This conclusion differs, as night from day, from the arguments presented on this issue by the 'silken Independent' Ireton at the Putney conference (October, 1647). In his opinion, the 'inherent' right of the poor English was restricted to the right to 'breathe their native air, but no more'.

Recognizing, however, that the light of truth which had already appeared in the hearts of the poor had still not reached the hearts of the rich, Winstanley turned to the 'natural', inherent right of all English people and demanded that the poor be given their lawful share of the common treasury, that they be recognized as having the right of free access to common and waste land, on which they could work together for their common weal. The second prerequisite of his communist 'minimum programme' was that the poor refuse to be hired to work the land of the rich. By their hard labour, the poor provided the rich with a privileged existence, turning them into lords and rulers over others. Hence the words 'heard' by Winstanley during his trance: 'Whoso-ever it is that labours in the earth for any person or persons,... the hand of the Lord shall be upon the labourer.'<sup>30</sup> Finally Winstanley saw only one way to realize his plan: given that he wholly excluded violence against anyone, he would point to the common lands as the just share for the poor of that which the creator had created for all the children of God, and summon



them everywhere to begin to cultivate it. 'If the rich wil stil hold fast this propriety of mine and thine, let them labour their own land with their own hands. And let the common people ... that say the earth is ours, not mine, let them labour together and eat bred together upon the commons, Mountains and Hills.'<sup>31</sup>

Winstanley sincerely believed in the feasibility of this plan, since the supply of common and waste land was so vast that it would have more than sufficed to free the poor from humiliating, slavish labour as hired workers, and from the threat of starvation if they were not hired. 'Divide England into three parts, scarce one part is manured: so that there is land enough to maintain all her children, and many die for want, or live under a heavy burden of pover-tie all their daies.'<sup>32</sup>

In the spring of 1649, when the popular masses believed that England was from now on a 'free commonwealth' as stated in parliamentary declarations, and responded to this, interpreting it in their own way, Winstanley decided to undertake an unusual step, and one which later was to be seen as historic: he became the leader of a small group of poor people who started of their own accord to cultivate together common land and waste ground. In the New Law of Righteousness Winstanley wrote about this as follows: 'And when the Lord doth shew unto me the place and manner, how he wil have us that are called common people, to manure and work upon the common Land, I wil then go forth and declare it in my action, to eat my bread with the sweat of my brows, without either giving or taking hire, looking upon the Land as freely mine as another's.'<sup>33</sup> It took almost two months for him to learn what was the 'will of the Lord' on this matter.

### THE COLONY OF DIGGERS ON ST GEORGE'S HILL

And so it was that one Sunday, 1 April, 1649, a small group of people led by Winstanley and William Everard, a former soldier, appeared on St George's Hill near Cobham (county of Surrey). Armed with spades and ploughs, they began to dig up the earth to sow, and to erect a house, testifying to their intention of living there. Soon

those living round about called them the 'diggers'. They themselves preferred to be known as 'the True Levellers', thus distinguishing themselves from 'political' Levellers such as Lilburne. The terms 'Levellers' and 'Diggers' first appeared in common parlance at the beginning of the 17th century, during the uprising in the midland counties against the enclosures (1607). Then these names were applied to those who burned to the ground the fences erected around common pastures, filled in ditches and pulled down earthen dams.

So it was that in the battle waged over land by the rural plebs of England, a handful of bold men challenged the England of the landowners, which had just constituted itself as a republic, by creating the first 'communist colony' in modern history. Its own history is full of drama, of unequal struggle and the amazing courage of the diggers. Although their number on St George's Hill was never more than several dozen, their extraordinary enterprise caused panic among the prosperous farmers of the surrounding districts. Only a few days after they arrived, they were seized by the servants of the Lord of Walton Manor and locked inside the parish church, but were soon released due to the lack of a charge. Then, on the instigation of that same Lord, a crowd of dependent landholders burned down the house built by the diggers, and also destroyed their implements. However, true to the instructions of their leader, Winstanley, the diggers did not react to the violence inflicted on them, but returned to St George's Hill and began again.

Two weeks later, the authorities in the capital joined in the persecution of the diggers. On 16 April the State Council received a report from a certain Henry Sanders, who 'informeth, that on Sunday was sennight last, there was one Everard, once of the army but was cashiered, who termeth himself a prophet, one Stewer and Colten, and two more, all living at Cobham, came to St George's Hill in Surrey, and began to dig on that side of the hill next to Campe Close, and sowed the ground with parsnips, carrots, and beans. On Monday following they were there again, being increased in their number, and on the next day, being Tuesday, they fired the heath, and burned at least forty rood of heath, which is a very great prejudice to the town. On Friday last they came again, between twenty and thirty, and wrought all day at digging. They did then

intend to have two or three ploughs at work, but they had not furnished themselves with seed-corn, which they did on Saturday at Kingston. They invite all to come in and help them, and promise them meat, drink, and clothes... They give out they will be four or five thousand within ten days...'<sup>34</sup> He concluded his report with a truly frightening phrase to the effect that it was feared they had something in mind.

This report by Sanders seemed so important and urgent to the State Council that on the same day Bradshawe, the chairman, conveyed it to the commander-in-chief of the parliamentary army, General Fairfax, in a letter sent in his name: 'Although the pretence of their being there by them avowed may seeme very ridiculous yett that conflux of people may bee a beginning whence things of a greater and more dangerous consequence may grow to a disturbance of the peace and quiett of the Commonwealth.'<sup>35</sup> Bradshawe demanded that a cavalry division be sent to Cobham with the order to disperse the diggers and not permit anything of the kind in the future. Fairfax was not slow to act. Captain Gladman, who was entrusted with carrying out the General's order, proved to have a far clearer head than both Bradshaw and Fairfax together. On arriving in Cobham at the head of a cavalry division and learning all the facts, he reported to Fairfax on 19 April that the order had been carried out, but with barely concealed black irony directed at the timorous London authorities. Having arrived in Cobham and talked with the Digger leaders Everard and Winstanley, he had been convinced that there was no need for the whole detachment to advance any further (that is, to St George's Hill). Having promised to go in person, accompanied by two or three soldiers, to see the Diggers where they were working in order to persuade them to disperse, Gladman finished his report by expressing his surprise that the State Council should have been so misinformed. Before returning to the capital, Gladman secured the promise of Everard and Winstanley to appear before Fairfax in London in order to explain their actions and set out their intentions.

On 20 April, the day on which Winstanley published, in the name of the Diggers, their first public declaration, entitled 'The True Levellers' Standard Advanced', with the aim of explaining their action, there was a famous meeting between Digger representatives and the General. The

main speaker at this meeting would seem to have been Everard. According to Whitelocke, Everard explained that their intent is to restore the Creation to its former condition.

'...As God had promised to make the barren land fruitful, so now what they did was to restore the ancient community of enjoying the fruit of the Earth, and to distribute the benefits thereof to the poor and needy, and to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked.

'...They intend not to meddle with any man's property, not to break down any pales or enclosures, but only to meddle with what was common and untilled, and to make it fruitful for the use of man.

'...They will not defend themselves by arms, but will submit into authority, and wait till the promised opportunity be offered, which they conceive to be at hand.'<sup>36</sup> Likewise the Digger declaration already referred to and published in London on that same day repeated the Digger aim of 'endeavouring to shut out of the Creation the cursed thing called *Particular Propriety*, which is the cause of all wars, blood-shed, theft, and enslaving Laws that hold the people under miserie'. Then, apparently addressing the General, Winstanley wrote: 'But I do not entreat thee, for thou art not to be intreated, but in the *Name of the Lord* ... I command thee to *let Israel go Free*, and quietly to gather into the place where I shall appoint.'<sup>37</sup> Truly the language of a prophet!

Curiously, the London press published a short report on this amazing meeting between the semi-beggar Diggers and the General, a meeting which at any other time would have seemed an impossibility. In this report the undertaking of the Diggers was presented as being little short of the work of madmen. Their intention seemed too wild to be taken seriously, and too fantastic; the language resembled waking hallucinations and their behaviour evoked smiles of condescension.

The Diggers refused to remove their hats in the presence of the General and addressed him in the familiar 'thou', 'because he was their fellow-creature'.<sup>38</sup> In the end Fairfax apparently agreed with Gladman's opinion that this entire enterprise was not worthy of 'state interest', and promised that henceforth the troops would not interfere in the conflict between the Diggers and the local landowners, as this was a purely local matter.

However, before following Everard and Winstanley from London to the Digger colony on St George's Hill, let us return to the pamphlet 'The True Levellers' Standard Advanced'. In addition to an exposition of the aims of the Digger movement, Winstanley sets out for the first time the main arguments justifying their undertaking—the proof in deed of the right of the poor to cultivate common land and waste ground without asking permission from anyone. Typically, as well as recognizing the right of all Englishmen to a share in 'the Common Treasury', the earth, 'that everyone that is born in the land may be fed by the Earth his Mother that brought him forth according to the Reason that rules in the Creation',<sup>39</sup> Winstanley also presents two political arguments which played an important role in his elaboration of the plebeian-peasant agrarian programme for the revolution. The first argument calls upon the Republic to fulfil the promises made by Parliament to the ordinary people at the beginning of the civil war, namely, to make them 'a free people' by granting freedom to each. Having believed in the 'declarations', 'agreements' and 'vows' so generously issued by the Long Parliament in those days, when it needed the support of the people in its battle against the king, the people sacrificed their property and their blood to secure the victory they desired. However, this 'agreement' between Parliament and the common people was violated by Parliament, and the people had still to receive their share in the victory. 'O thou Powers of *England*, though thou hast promised to make this People a Free People, yet thou hast so handled the matter, through thy self-seeking humour, that thou hast wrapped us up more in bondage, and oppression lies heavier upon us.'<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that this motif of the deception practised by the Republic in 1649 is found not only in the writings of Winstanley, but also in pamphlets by Lilburne written in 1649, and in particular in 'The New Chains Discovered'. However, one also cannot but note one main difference between these pamphlets: Lilburne saw the deception of the grandees from the position of small-scale property owners. Winstanley saw this same deception from the position of the masses. That is why, in the first case, the argument is essentially that, instead of being a democratic state system, the 1649 Republic has proved to be merely a mask concealing the autocratic power of the officer elite. In the sec-

ond case, the deception is seen as lying above all in the fact that the Republic has preserved the landowner system intact. While one man calls the land his, writes Winstanley, and another has no choice but to hire himself out, the creation is kept enslaved. Moreover, many (including the officer elite), having grown rich during the war, have bought up land and become landowners. Having become landowners, however, they have exalted themselves to the rank of judges, rulers and men of state.

Finally, in order to justify the Digger demand that the poor be given free access to common land, Winstanley offers one historico-political argument: the landowners are the successors of the Norman conquerors of England. Thus Winstanley was making use of the widespread thesis of 'the Norman yoke' in order to provide a 'historical' justification of the demand that 'the Common Treasury', the land, be freed from the power of those who had usurped it. By keeping the whole people under the power of the lords of the manor, the new rulers were preserving the 'Norman yoke', and that enslaving tyranny which dated back to William the Conqueror. 'Take notice that *England* is not a Free People, till the poor, that have no land, have a free allowance to dig and labour the Commons, and so live as comfortably as the landlords that live in their Inclosures.'<sup>41</sup>

Let us return, however, to St George's Hill. The landlords were continuing to terrorize a handful of diggers. At the end of April they provoked another attack on the colony. Yet again, however, the diggers, dispersed by a crowd incited by the landowners, gathered a few days later on the waste ground, continuing their labour with the persistence and courage of men inspired by a truly noble aim. At the end of May, the first shoots of barley and beans appeared on the few acres of land dug by spades and wooden ploughs. Meanwhile London had temporarily left the Diggers in peace. In fact the authorities had other problems to deal with, for the army was threatening to slip from beneath their control. In May there were insurrections under the Leveller banner in a number of regiments, and this was far more dangerous for the future of the Republic of the Independents than the undertaking of a few dozen harmless Diggers who did not even defend themselves against open violence. When, on 29 May, Fairfax visited the colony of Diggers on his way to London, he found only twelve

men at work there. This time it was Winstanley who was the main speaker. Fairfax tried to persuade the men to disperse: in reply Winstanley again referred to the right of the poor to cultivate common land—which was why they were termed ‘common’ and not ‘private’. Not seeing in the Diggers’ activity any particular threat to the Republic, Fairfax departed, leaving them for the time being to their fate. It is worth noting that far from all the members of the State Council, nor yet Cromwell, were of this opinion. The England of the landowners was disturbed by various rumours repeated in conservative pamphlets. In ‘Mercurious Pragmatious’ (20-27 April), for example, one can read: ‘What this fanaticall insurrection may grow into cannot be conceived, for Mahomet had as small and despicable a beginning, whose damnable infections have spread themselves many hundreds years since over the face of half the Universe.’<sup>42</sup>

On 1 June, Winstanley published A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England, which was by way of being a public act constituting, alongside the world of private property, another world based on collective property and the collective consumption of the product of collective labour. These two forms of human organization were clearly distinguished: the first, the traditional, existed on an earth divided into ‘mine’ and ‘thine’, while the second existed on common land that belonged to no one in particular, but was the common property of all those who wished to join the Diggers. The Declaration stated: ‘We ... do in the name of all the poor oppressed people in *England*, declare unto you, that call your selves Lords of Manors and Lords of the Land, that, in regard the King of Righteousness, our Maker ... we finde Resolutions in us ... to dig and plough up the Commons and Waste Land through England ... that your Laws shall not reach to oppress us any longer, unless you by your Laws will shed the innocent blood that runs in our veins.’<sup>43</sup> This phrase has a profound meaning. On the one hand, the departure of the poor from ‘the world of private property’ to common land meant their liberation from the law which accorded them the position of pariahs, the most deprived and persecuted. On the other hand, in cultivating common land and waste ground, the Diggers, clearly, were not violating the laws which protected the inviolability of ‘private’ enclosed land. That is why they believed themselves outside the sphere of

action of these laws and the oppressive power of the state. This was followed by an exposition of the order which would distinguish the world of 'common land' established on the waste ground of St George's Hill by the Diggers, from the order of the world of private property which ruled next door, behind the hedges of the private lands. And the chief feature determining all the rest as deriving from collective productive labour on common land was the collective consumption of the product, which excluded sale and purchase, and also money as the means of such transaction, from relations among the Diggers.

It is not difficult to deduce from the general tone of this Digger declaration that the harshness of those enemies who repeatedly destroyed the fruits of their labour did not break their will but further strengthened it. Typical in this connection are the warnings that Diggers who lack ploughs, carts, bread and seed cannot reconcile themselves to the fact that the Lords of the neighbouring manors of Walton and Cobham hastily fell and cart away wood from the waste land occupied by the Diggers, wood which could provide them with the last available means of subsistence until the first harvest. They warn the lords of the manors that in future their carts loaded with common wood will be detained because it is wood destined for the use of those who do not spare themselves for the good of their neighbour.

The Diggers were not, of course, alone. They had their pitiless enemies, but also not a few friends who sympathized with their cause, and not only in neighbouring villages, but also in other counties. These even included people who clearly possessed another source of income. Without their open or covert support the Diggers would not have survived the harsh persecution of the local landowners for even a few days, let alone several months. This is why one cannot judge the number of those who supported the Digger cause by the number of those who actually composed the colony, or even the number of those whose signatures appeared on their declarations. The masses were on the move in a number of other counties. Of the well-known undertakings similar to the colony on St George's Hill, one could mention: the colony in Cox Hall (Kent), Wellingborough (Northamptonshire), Iver (Buckinghamshire), Barnet (Hertfordshire), Dunstable (Bedfordshire), Bosworth (Leicestershire), and a number of



others. There are grounds for believing that the total number of such colonies in England in 1649-1650 was about ten. At the beginning of June, 1649, Winstanley remarked in a letter to Fairfax: 'We understand that our digging upon that Common is the talk of the whole Land; some approving, some disowning; some are friends, filled with love, and sees the worke intends good to the Nation...; others are enemies filled with fury, and falsely report of us.'<sup>44</sup> Given the nationwide resonance of what happened on St George's Hill, Winstanley and his colleagues thought it most important to continue as long as possible, whatever sufferings might befall them, in order to inspire the poor in other counties to similar demonstrations.

Thus the colony near Cobham was simply the most notable episode in an independent movement of the rural poor. Unfortunately, the lack of sources (or, more accurately, insufficient study of existing sources) makes it impossible to estimate the scale of the movement or shed any light on the concrete history of individual colonies. There can be no doubt, however, that it was a truly mass movement. Moreover, we are unable to answer the most interesting question, namely how daily life in these colonies was organized. Very probably only a few lived on the waste land, while the majority continued to live in the neighbouring parishes, and came to the colony only from time to time to take part in collective work. Indeed, the first Digger declaration (end of April) carries five signatures; the second declaration (June) — forty-five signatures, whereas Goldman informs us that there were never more than twenty people on St George's Hill, and Fairfax found twelve there at the end of May. The rest were presumably people who sympathized with Winstanley's cause but did not take an active part in it. It would seem that only those poor who had neither work nor food composed the core of the colony, while others gave them assistance, either in the form of work, or by making meagre contributions.

As time passed the enemy delivered further blows against the colony. At the beginning of June, the lords of the manor succeeded in bringing to the waste land infantrymen who were quartered in Walton, led by captain Stravie. They seriously wounded one of the Diggers, beat a youth who was working with him, and burned down the house. On 9 June, Winstanley complained to Fairfax about the actions of the soldiers. In a letter delivered personally

to the General, he again emphasized his readiness, if it proved unavoidable, to die 'doing our duty to our Creator, by endeavouring from that power he hath put into our hearts to lift up his Creation out of bondage'.<sup>45</sup> In this letter Winstanley took yet another step in developing the thesis of the 'Norman yoke' mentioned above. This thesis contained elements of actual history interwoven with elements of myth coming not only from folklore but from contemporary historiography. As has already been said, this thesis was widely used by representatives of various political currents in the revolutionary camp as the justification for their programmes. It is only in the social philosophy of Winstanley, however, that it becomes the basis of a peasant-plebeian programme for purging the country of its feudal legacy—the landlord system. Following the logic of this thesis as it appears in the letter to Fairfax, it can be summarized as follows. William the Conqueror, having made himself King of England, had deprived the English of their inherent right to the land, turning them into servants of the Norman soldiers, now becoming the lords. From that time on the English crown had been in the hands of conquerors. Consequently Charles I had also inherited his crown from William the Conqueror. It naturally followed that all the laws issued since that time had only consolidated the results of the Norman conquest. Standing on these royal decrees, the gentry and the clerics were keeping the community (the common people) of England in slavery. Winstanley was not mistaken when he called the laws of the 1649 republic 'royal' in that, following the execution of the King, it was officially proclaimed that the previous laws would remain in force under the new regime. Up to this point Winstanley is setting out a position on this issue common to the whole of the democratic revolutionary movement, which demanded the codification of existing law, judicial reform and changes in criminal legislation. However, what then followed in Winstanley's presentation of the thesis of the 'Norman yoke' was quite original, and formed the essence of the peasant-plebeian agrarian revolutionary programme. In the letter to Fairfax, Winstanley writes: 'Whether Lords of Manours were not the successors of the Colonells and chief officers of *William the Conqueror* ... and the power of the sword was and is the seale to their Title?' This is then followed by a purely rhetorical but decisive question:

'Whether Lords of Mannours have not lost their Royalty ... since the common People of England, as well as some of the Gentry, have conquered King Charles and recovered themselves from under the Norman Conquest?'<sup>46</sup> Such was the political argument of decisive importance with which Winstanley justified the cause of the Diggers. From this it followed that, as the Norman conqueror had deprived the whole of the English people of their freedom by taking the land from them, now, after the execution of the King and the abolition of the monarchical system, the whole country had been liberated from the consequences of the Norman conquest. Thus the common people should also recover their freedom, regardless of their social estate, otherwise what benefit was there for the common people (who had suffered most from the civil wars) in the victory over the King?

One factor of major importance is worth noting: in this context the term 'freedom' in Winstanley's interpretation is considerably wider than the immediate demands of the Diggers. It reflected not only the interests of the landless (regardless of whether or not they had remained in the countryside), who were demanding *free* access to common pasture and waste ground, but also the interests of the small-scale landholders, the so-called copyholders, who were demanding that their plots be freed from the power of the lords of the manor (that is, that their holdings become freehold) so that they would be freed from the constant threat of losing their land (the unremitting increase in the holding-related fines and rents was evidence of the reality of this danger). This important expansion in the Digger programme was reflected in the terminology of the letter under consideration: the term 'commons' in this context is contrasted against the term 'inclosures', that is, fenced-off land, and this could only mean one thing – all the land which had not been fenced off by the lords of manors and freeholders, both open fields and common pastures. This shift in the Digger programme was also reflected in the fact that the gentry were contrasted not with the poor, as before, but with a much broader category – the 'common people', 'the commons of England', which included all who were not titled nobility. In other words, the plebeian agrarian programme formulated by Winstanley fused in this case with the agrarian programme of the mass of peasant copyholders, since the experience of the

Digger colony on St George's Hill had directly shown him that achieving the demands of the Diggers was inseparably linked with the abolition of the landlord system as such, and thus with the vital interests of the copyholders.

It is quite another matter that, given the deeply embedded social and property stratification of the English countryside, the inclusion within one programme of the demands of the copyholders and those of the landless poor could not but hold back the further development of mass peasant demonstrations. Certainly this did not promote the unification of the revolutionary forces in the countryside: in these circumstances, the collectivist principles of agriculture practised in the Digger colonies could only either disturb or even repel the copyholder peasants. What matters to us is something else – Winstanley's deep insight into the basic class contradiction in the *revolutionary* camp, a contradiction deriving from the agrarian question. So accurate was this in political and economic terms that he indicated the divide which split the English countryside into two camps: the *bourgeois-aristocratic* and the *peasant-plebeian*. In short, the thesis which had been put forward in the most general terms in 'The New Law of Righteousness' – 'every one was made to be a Lord over the Creation of the Earth ... not any one to be a bond-slave and a beggar under the Creation of his own kinde'<sup>47</sup> – was now expressed in the terminology of class opposition, a terminology *not used by any other political philosopher or political figure of the period*. Only Winstanley revealed the essence of the parliamentary act on the abolition of knightly holdings (1646) as the selfishly one-sided (to the benefit of the bourgeois-aristocratic bloc) *abolition of the feudal structure of landownership*, while the feudally dependent peasantry *is left under the yoke of this same system* since, as regards the peasantry, the power of the landlords was left intact. In his 'Appeal to the House of Commons' (July, 1649), Winstanley wrote: 'Surely, if you found out the Court of Wards to be a burden, and freed Lords of Mannors, and Gentry from paying fines to the King; and freed their children from the slavery of falling Ward; Let the Common People be set free too from paying homage to Lords of Mannors... And seeing you took away the will of the King from enslaving Lords of Mannors, take away the will of Lords of Mannors from enslaving the Common People.'<sup>48</sup> As it was well-known to everyone that the copy-

holders, according to the letter of the law, were landholders 'at the will of the lord', this appeal by Winstanley contained an already direct demand for the abolition of 'copyholdings', and their conversion into freeholdings independent of the will of the lord. We should once again emphasize that it is only today that researchers have brought to light the full historical significance of Winstanley's parallel indicating the one-sided nature of the Ordinance passed by the Long Parliament in 1645 and abolishing feudal landholding exclusively to the benefit of the landlords. Winstanley proved to be the only figure in the radical wing of the revolution who pointed to the usurping nature of this Ordinance, which endowed only the lords of the manor by converting their holding into virtually private property, while leaving the copyholders to one side.

It has already been noted that, in comparison with the first Digger declaration ('The True Levellers' Standard Advanced'), the thesis that the earth is the common treasury of mankind is given a far deeper and broader interpretation by Winstanley in June and July, 1649. There can be no doubt that this was the result of the experience acquired by the Diggers, their face to face confrontation with the lords of neighbouring manors, and the support they were given by many copyholders. Here is what Winstanley wrote in his letter to Fairfax of 9 June, 1649. 'When you were at our Works upon the Hill, we told you, many of the Country-people that were offended at first, begin now to be moderate, and to see righteousness in our work, and to own it.'<sup>49</sup> Having experienced for themselves the tyrannical authority of the manor lords, the Diggers not only had a clearer understanding of the position of the copyholders, but also of the *link* between their struggle for the right to cultivate common land and the desire of the copyholders to see the abolition of the semi-feudal status of their holdings.

It is not surprising that Winstanley arrived at a clear understanding of this link only during and towards the end of the sad experience of the Diggers on St George's Hill. In the appeal 'To All Englishmen' (March, 1650), the demands of the copyholders are not referred to indirectly as before, but directly in the Digger programme. Referring to acts of Parliament abolishing the monarchical government and the House of Lords, and also the engagement in support of the Republic (the signing of which was mandatory

upon all the magistrates of England), Winstanley wrote: 'Now behold all Englishmen, that by vertue of these Lawes, and the *Engagement*, the Tenants of Copyholds are freed from obedience to their Lords of *Mannors* and all pour People may build upon, and plant the *Commons*... Neither can the *Lords* of *Mannors* compell their Tenants of Copyholds, to come to their *Court-Barons*, ... nor take an Oath to be true to them, nor to pay fines, Heriots, quit-rent, ... as formerly, while the King and Lords were in their power. And if the Tenants stand up to maintain their Freedom, against their *Lords*' oppressing power, the Tenants forfeit nothing, but are protected by the *Laws* and *Engagement* of the Land.'<sup>50</sup>

It is no accident that we have looked in such detail at the role played by Winstanley as the ideologist of 'the True Levellers' in formulating the peasant-plebeian agrarian programme, and in the struggle for its revolutionary implementation. This is because the literature devoted to Winstanley presents him primarily either as a religious thinker or as the founder of a 'communist utopia' and the leader of the 'communist' experiment of the Diggers on St George's Hill. However, the very scale of this experiment turns it into an episode which, albeit caused by the revolution, was apart from it, not part of the main stream and having no direct relationship to it. It is no coincidence that in both cases Winstanley appears as merely a dreamer, even when he is leading the Diggers and waging a courageous, selfless struggle in their defence. However, regardless of the kind of communal life being asserted by the Diggers on St George's Hill, their very activities were the most vivid manifestation of the peasant-plebeian method of clearing the country of feudalism. The fact that Winstanley led this movement and gave it theoretical foundations enables us to see in him the *most prominent figure in the radical current of the revolution at the highest, republican stage of its development*. That the two currents of revolutionary democracy – the petty-bourgeois (led by the so-called political Levellers) and the plebeian-peasant (led by the True Levellers) – were *unable to flow into one*, but remained divided, doomed each to defeat. In particular, the fate of the Digger colony on St George's Hill well illustrates this truth, as also does the outcome of the army mutinies under the Leveller banner in the spring and autumn of 1649. True, the Digger colony on St George's Hill –

largely, if paradoxically, because of their refusal to use armed resistance against violence—proved the longer-lived, but its existence was spectral rather than real. After several attacks on the Diggers in June, during which the crops were destroyed, the livestock crippled, the houses burned and the residents beaten and chased from the waste ground, legal persecution began on a charge lodged by the lord of a neighbouring manor, Francis Drake. After only one side of the suit had been heard, the Diggers were denied a hearing on the grounds that they had refused the services of a professional lawyer. The jury, which had been specially selected, brought in the verdict of guilty: each of the defendants (including Winstanley) was sentenced to pay a fine of £10, and also to pay the legal expenses. As it was already known that the Diggers had nothing which could be confiscated to cover such large fines, the main aim of the court must have been to create the legal basis for further harassment. This continued without break far into the autumn. When it became evident that this unending, harsh persecution unleashed by the lords of the manors had made it impossible for the Diggers to remain any longer on the waste ground of Walton Manor, the colony moved to that part of the waste ground which lay within the boundaries of Cobham manor, the property of pastor John Platt. Winter, however, was approaching and it was already impossible to live under the open sky. Moreover, pastor Platt proved to be an even harsher and more treacherous enemy than the secular lord of Walton. The justices of the peace supported by the sheriff of the county immediately demanded of the Diggers that they leave the waste ground. When the Diggers refused to obey, reports were again sent to London calling them Royalists, atheists and polygamists. Finally they were arrested and imprisoned for five weeks. On 10 October, the State Council ordered an armed detachment to be sent against them for the second time. On 27 and 28 November, the Diggers were again attacked by the hired men of the lord of the manor, who destroyed the house built on the waste ground and carried off property they found in it. Diggers were wounded. However, contrary to the expectations of their enemies, the Diggers again returned to the same spot, constructed earthen dug-outs, sowed several acres of wheat and rye, and told their persecutors that they would perish rather than abandon the cause they had under-

taken. In these conditions Winstanley wrote two letters to General Fairfax complaining of the behaviour of the soldiers who, in violation of the General's promise not to intervene, had attacked the Diggers. He appealed to the London Council, to doctors of divinity at English universities, and wrote a bitterly accusing pamphlet entitled 'A New-Yeers Gift for the Parliament and Armie'. 'My Advice to you Gentlemen is this, Hereafter to lie still and cherish the Diggers ... and why should you be so bitter against them?' he asks the powers-that-be, still trying to convince them that his comrades-in-arms are loyal to the Republic and that they are not interfering with anyone's property. 'O, let them live by you; some of them have been Souldiers, and some countri-men that were alwayes friends to the Parliaments cause.'<sup>51</sup>

In this pamphlet, however, one can already hear the first notes of tiredness and disillusionment. '*England* is a prison ... and poor men are the prisoners.'<sup>52</sup> This is not surprising, as many months had already passed since the Diggers had raised the standard of this unusual demonstration by the poorest commoners of England against the power of the lords of the manor, and they still did not have as many followers as they had expected that spring. It did not become a truly mass movement. The Diggers 'on the hill' struggled on alone. They lost everything they had possessed at the beginning of their work. They never succeeded in collecting a harvest. Winter began, and they were without resources, without dwellings, persecuted and harassed — a handful of sufferers. Nonetheless they did not give in. Compelled to leave the piece of waste ground they had first dug up, they moved to another piece. How they passed the winter is not known, but in the spring of 1650 they became active again. By this time, following their example, colonies of poor had appeared on waste ground in a number of other counties. In an attempt to tell the truth about themselves and the purpose of their undertaking, the Diggers near Cobham sent representatives to the counties of Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Middlesex, Berkshire, Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire. They took with them a letter from Winstanley signed by 25 Diggers from Cobham. While emphasizing that the Diggers were resolved to continue the undertaking they had begun — the liberation of the country from tyranny — Winstanley warned his sympathizers in all



England that the extreme need experienced by the Diggers at Cobham for over a year might oblige them to interrupt their work, which would mean the collapse of the hopes of all the poor of England for their rapid liberation. This move was accelerated by one particular factor. Availing themselves of the growing sympathy among the poor for the undertaking of Winstanley and his colleagues, certain unknown persons had travelled around the counties with forged letter bearing Winstanley's signature and collected money which, of course, they had then put into their own pockets. The true representatives of the Cobham Diggers were soon arrested in Wellingborough (Northamptonshire), and the authorities had in their hands a letter by Winstanley and a list of the places they had visited.

In March, 1650, the 'poor residents' of Wellingborough issued a 'declaration' that they had begun to cultivate common waste land called Bareshank, and that some freeholders had agreed to relinquish their rights over this land in favour of the Diggers, while others had promised to supply them with seed to sow. The 'Declaration' by the Diggers of Wellingborough also stated that around 300 people were prepared to follow Winstanley's example. Not surprisingly, the State Council was seriously worried. In a letter to the justices of the peace in the county of Northampton, it approved measures taken by the local authorities against the 'Levellers', and advised the use of the full weight of the law against 'those that intrude upon men's properties'.<sup>53</sup> This fusion of Diggers and Levellers is very indicative, all the more so as these names appeared simultaneously during the 1607 uprising. Moreover, the Diggers themselves, as we already know, called themselves 'the True Levellers'.

As has already been mentioned, almost nothing is known about the fate of the Digger colonies which formed around this time in other counties. It was, not unnaturally, the colony near Cobham led by Winstanley which was most hated by the authorities as an example inspiring the poor. At the end of February, 1650, the State Council informed Fairfax about the continuing complaints against the Diggers of Cobham, emphasizing that the failure to take measures against them 'encourages the looser and disordered sort of people to the greater boldness in other designs by their impunity in this in which they have so far proceeded that they cannot be brought to justice by the ordinary course',<sup>54</sup> and thereby encouraging him to take

military action against the unarmed Diggers. Aware they had London's support, the local landowners also grew bolder. At the end of March, men in the pay of John Platt yet again chased the Diggers off St George's Hill. However, they returned once more to settle on another piece of waste ground not far away. On the Friday of Easter week, the devout Platt appeared in the company of 50 men and ordered that all the property found there should be burned. In order to prevent the return of the Diggers, he then left several men to mount guard round the clock over the waste ground.

Thus ended this dramatic demonstration by the rural plebs against the landowning monopoly of the lords of the manor under the banner of free access to the land for those who wished to live by the fruits of their own labour. The Diggers were setting, albeit in miniature, 'the kingdom of righteousness' as they in their circumstances imagined it, against the world of greed and oppression, even if this kingdom was erected on just a small piece of waste land measuring only a few acres. The light of truth which they had lit, however, was so bright that only inveterate opponents of popular freedom refused to see it. Such was Winstanley's supposition. The Digger demonstration was inevitably doomed to failure from the start, not only because the Diggers were few in number, but because of the very form their protest took. Winstanley believed that the Diggers did not need to have recourse to violence, even in self-defence—that which is erected by force will be destroyed by force. Justice has no need of force but triumphs by virtue of spiritual weapons. The truth will conquer with love!

We have already set out the religious-philosophical basis for this tactic, which seems to us so naive, so fatal, and yet which had, in those circumstances and balance of forces, one undoubted advantage: it impeded to some extent the overwhelming power of the enemy. It was precisely thanks to this tactic that a handful of Diggers were able to remain on St George's Hill for almost a year, openly challenging the government of the republic of the Independents. Given such a tactic, a year is a fantastic period. Is there any need to provide further evidence of the advantage of this tactic over the May uprising by the army Levellers in 1649, mercilessly put down by the 'freedom-loving' Cromwell and his loyal troops?

In his 'parting word', entitled 'An Humble Request to the Ministers of both Universities and to All Lawyers in every Inns-a-Court', Winstanley, while acknowledging what was essentially the failure of his movement, also affirmed that his aims were of enduring significance and unconquerable. He was in no way exaggerating the historical importance of the Digger movement when he declared that the struggle of the poor of England against the lords of the manor over common land 'is the greatest controversie that hath rise up this 600.yeaes past',<sup>55</sup> thus clearly defining the link between the Digger movement and the centuries-old struggle—beginning with the Anglo-Saxon resistance to the Norman conquest—by the English peasantry to enjoy the usufruct of the land independently of the power of the manorial lords. Consequently Winstanley saw the Digger movement as a struggle for an *agrarian revolution in favour of those who cultivate the land*. Finally, Winstanley saw the fact that the 1649 republic supported the landowners against the Diggers as a *betrayal* of the cause in the name of which the commons of England had waged the civil war against the king and his supporters. He warned that, in opposing the Diggers, the republic was throwing itself into the arms of its fiercest opponents—the Royalists. 'Wee know that England cannot bee a free Commonwealth unless all the poore commoners have a free use and benefitt of the land.'<sup>56</sup> Although the monarchy had been declared non-existent, the abolition of royal power was impossible while it remained, in effect, in the hands of the manorial lords. This was the most serious warning issued to the republic about the danger threatening from the right—now that it had repelled the poor commoners, it had lost its main support, the popular masses, and its fall was inevitable. The preservation of the power of the manorial lords, warned Winstanley, presages the fall of this republic.

Nonetheless, while understanding no less than Lilburne the whole anti-popular nature of the policies of the republic, Winstanley never wavered on the question of whether he should support the monarchy or the republic. Only recently the English historian G.E. Aylmer discovered a hitherto unknown pamphlet by Winstanley: 'Englands Spirit Unfolded. Or An Incouragement To Take An Engagement'. Insofar as this pamphlet in any way broadens our understanding of Winstanley, this applies only to his

political views. Although it has proved impossible to date the pamphlet precisely, it would seem to have been written and published before 'The Fire in the Bush', dated the spring of 1650. In it Winstanley speaks as a supporter of the republic, seeing this government as the only one which offers any hope of improving the position of the commons.

If Winstanley called on the reader to support the 'New Engagement' (a form of oath of loyalty to the republic), which had to be signed by all magistrates, it was because he realized that the preservation of a republican government was necessary in order to have the opportunity to attract the attention of the authorities, by the spoken and written word, to the position of the poor, not to mention expectation of measures aimed at improving that position. In the pamphlet 'The Fire in the Bush', which was apparently published not long after the tragic conclusion to the social experiment conducted on St George's Hill, Winstanley reached the apogee of his exposure of the wealthy, the new disposers of the life of the nation, and predicted the inevitable collapse of the republic.

'You oppressing powers of the world, who think God hath blessed you, because you sit downe in that Chaire of Government, out of which the former Tyrants are gone ... that pretend to be saviours of the people ... and yet serve your selves upon the peoples ruines, not regarding the crie of the poore, surely you must have your overturnings too.'<sup>57</sup>

On the broader level, Winstanley predicted the inevitable destruction of all selfish governments on earth.

Nonetheless, Winstanley inserted a dedication to Cromwell, who remained his last hope, in his last pamphlet, written in the autumn of 1651 and entitled 'The Law of Freedom'. 'And now I have set the candle at your door, for you have power ... to Act for Common Freedom, if you will; I have no power.'<sup>58</sup> Winstanley repeats his warning: 'If you, and those in power with you, should be found walking in the Kings steps, can you secure your selves ... from an overturn?'<sup>59</sup>

Thus ended the epic of a few dozen Diggers – a 'local' incident in the eyes of their contemporaries, an enterprise undertaken by a handful of fanatics – in effect proved to be an enterprise of continuing historical meaning and importance which was completed by their distant descendants. Long months of continual harassment and physical

terrorization by the neighbouring manorial lords with the approval of the authorities in London achieved its purpose—the Diggers were defeated and dispersed. What now awaited Winstanley, their leader, ideologist and inspirer? Several years later he himself would answer that question: 'Now my health and estate is decayed, and I grow in age, I must either beg or work for day wages ... for another; when as the Earth is as freely my Inheritance and birthright as his whom I must work for; and if I cannot live by my weak labours, but take where I need ... he will hang me for a thief.'<sup>60</sup>

In this passage he describes not only, and perhaps not so much, his own personal fate as the fate of thousands of poor men like himself. Nonetheless the personal motif comes through clearly in each word of this admission. It would seem that shortly after the final suppression of the Digger demonstration near Cobham, Winstanley left that parish for some time with a few of his closest associates. On the invitation of Lady Eleanor Davies, a woman as wealthy as she was extravagant, and who took an interest in preaching, they became hired servants on her estate in Hertfordshire. Winstanley himself became either a land rent collector or the steward of the estate. One of the leading preachers of the radical sect known as the Ranters, Lawrence Clarkson, saw Winstanley's employment as a 'shameful retreat' from his enterprise on St George's Hill, and on this basis accused Winstanley of 'self-love and ambition'. However, in this position Winstanley again revealed, as he once had in commerce, his 'practical' incompetence: his honesty and conscientiousness, his trusting nature and compassion were not those features of his character likely to bring him success in his job. It is more than likely that this was the reason for the conflict which arose at the end of 1650 between him and the 'tender-hearted' lady and which forced him to return to his former parish.

### WINSTANLEY'S SOCIAL UTOPIA

In the autumn of 1651, Winstanley finished his last and most significant work—'The Law of Freedom' (the dedication to Cromwell is dated 5 November, 1651).

Winstanley indicates that he had intended to present the pamphlet to Cromwell two years earlier. The disorder of the time, however, had caused him to delay its completion. This can be understood to mean that, on the one hand, he was waiting to see what the policy of the republic would be, to what extent it would be sensitive to the voice of the people. On the other hand, despite the fairly clear evidence that Cromwell's 'love of freedom' was contained within quite narrow bounds, despite his merciless and rapid counter-measures during the Leveller uprising in 1649, the popular masses still retained the hope that justice would finally triumph in his actions. His name as 'the chief regicide' still recalled his implacable hostility towards the monarchy and its open and covert supporters. Towards the end of 1651 these hopes visibly revived as the dissatisfaction of Cromwell and his colleagues with the Long Parliament grew. Prompted by the hope that Cromwell might possibly undergo a radical change, and by the numerous projects and plans for replacing the now clearly outworn legislative body of the republic, Winstanley ventured to present his own draft constitution, which he called 'The Law of Freedom'.

In his address to Cromwell, Winstanley wrote that Cromwell had been accorded the highest honour ever granted to a man by the Most High, that of being the leader of a people who had thrown off the yoke of the Pharaoh. With amazing historical insight, he then warned Cromwell that the fate of the republic depended on the support of the people: 'And now you have the Power of the Land in Your hand, You must do one of these two things ... either set the Land free to the oppressed Commons ... or ... you must onely remove the Conquerors Power out of the Kings hand into other mens, maintaining the old Laws still: and then your Wisdom and Honor is blasted for ever, and you will either lose your self, or lay the foundation of greater slavery to posterity than you ever knew.'<sup>61</sup>

Winstanley's writings in 1649 leave in no doubt the fact that he not only rejected property inequality, but was also, it seems, the only thinker of his day who had such a profound understanding of the *exploiter* principle which underlay this inequality.

'No man,' he wrote in 'The Law of Freedom', 'can be rich, but he must be rich, either by his own labors, or by

the labors of other men helping him: If a man have no help from his neighbor, he shall never gather an estate of hundreds and thousands a year.<sup>62</sup> Further on he continues: 'But all rich men live at ease, feeding and clothing themselves by the labors of other men, not by their own ... rich men receive all they have from the laborers hand... For truly the common people by their labors ... have lifted up their Land-lords and others to rule in tyranny and oppression over them.'<sup>63</sup>

It is not surprising that it was Winstanley who pondered not only the reasons for the emergence of such a system, but also the ways and means of liberating men from it. Inasmuch as private ownership of land, the basic source of human existence, made possible a system founded on man's exploitation of man or, as Winstanley put it, enabled one man to be the lord over another like himself, then the creation of a just order required, in his opinion, the recognition of the land as the common treasury of all 'the children of God'. There was not and could not be, he emphasized, any middle path between these two. He went on to argue to Cromwell that these antipodal forms of property corresponded to two antipodal forms of political government: a *truly republican* government in the first case, and in the second, a *monarchical* (essentially royal) government (even if it called itself a 'republic'), as was the case in England in 1649. Consequently there is and cannot be a 'middle road' or 'compromise forms' in the structure of the state, since it is not a matter of the external, juridical definitions of the state institutions themselves, but of the form of land ownership and land use which they embody and defend. It is sufficient to compare this analysis of state forms with their analysis in Leveller pamphlets (above all those by Lilburne) for the difference in penetration to the social essence to become manifest. Lilburne was interested in the formal, legal capacity of the free-born, while Winstanley was interested in the property substantiation of this legal capacity.

It is therefore not surprising that Winstanley chose the title 'The Law of Freedom in a Platform or True Magistracy Restored' for his draft restructuring of society on the basis of the abolition of private landownership and private land use, since this was the basic condition for making freedom *available for all*. We have already noted that the plan which Winstanley presented to Cromwell for judge-

ment was, for him, a draft constitution for a genuine republic, and not merely a government so named, and contained a detailed description of every aspect of the life of the citizens in an imagined ideal state system. Winstanley himself admitted that this ideal which, as we have already mentioned, he described as not drawn from books, 'burned him with fire' from the very moment when it was 'proposed' to him by the 'inner voice'. For this reason he collected as many scattered papers as he was able to discover, unified them and, 'to quieten his spirit', finally decided to present them to Cromwell.

As we can see, Winstanley's social utopia was the fruit of difficult, even painful reflections on how to translate into reality a system of equality and freedom. It was the result of a profound analysis of the basic contradictions tearing the 1649 republic apart from within as an unconcealed oligarchy of the Independent gentry and its bourgeois allies. At one and the same time it was a social utopia and a programme drawn up for that same republic if it appeared, in the person of Cromwell, still capable of 'illumination' and of 'rebirth' for the cause of freedom. It was also a testament left for the descendants of those who attempted by their own efforts, and despite the republic, to implement that programme. That is why, in concluding his address to Cromwell, Winstanley writes: 'And now I have set the candle at your door, for you have power ... to Act for Common Freedom, if you will; I have no power.'

The importance of this work, which reflects the concluding stage of Winstanley's spiritual quest, is that it not only helps us to understand his place in the history of social and political thought in the English revolution, but also his place in the history of socio-utopian thought in general. We shall therefore look at its structure in greater detail.

In terms of its content, 'The Law of Freedom' is easily divided into three parts: 1) a critique of contemporary reality (a list of the complaints of the poor commoners); 2) arguments on the nature of the state and the law, and 3) the social utopia itself—a description of the economic, social and political organization of what is, for Winstanley, the ideal society, and including, in addition to a few cosmological observations, a basic code of law for this society. There is scarcely any need to point out that what we are examining is not a scholarly work, but a work of popular



literature, which makes it all the more amazing to see the level of thought, in comparison with the scholarly literature of the day, to which, in the person of Winstanley, this literature was capable of rising in the course of the social revolution.

Winstanley was the first among the great utopian socialists not to use the method traditional since Thomas More—the description of a supposedly real and ideal society existing elsewhere and presented in the form of a utopian ‘novel’. For Winstanley these harmonious forms of human social life were not some tale from across the seas, not the beautiful far away, but a plan for social organization which could be introduced immediately in the England of his day. For that reason he wrote not a fascinating narrative about something supposedly seen, but a detailed constitution for such a society, embracing virtually every aspect of its life. The republic indeed existed, and Cromwell, or rather his name, still inspired hope. One more detail about Winstanley’s utopia. In contrast to the utopian ‘socialist’ systems, which were deductions made from more or less abstract postulates of reason and conscience, systems based as much on generating ideas as on the resources of the author’s own imagination, ‘The Law of Freedom’ described the details of a just social system on the basis of those concrete conditions which existed in the England of the 1640’s. However, while creating his utopian system as the historical reality of a given country at a given time, Winstanley indicated that stratum of society which had the pioneer role to play in realizing the Law of Freedom. It is for this reason that the content of his utopia provides important evidence of the historical reality and the most significant aspects of the life of the common people around this time.

Before moving on to examine the content of the individual parts of ‘The Law of Freedom’, we should point out that in religious-philosophical terms the position of the author underwent considerable modification, not only in comparison with his pamphlets of 1648, but even in comparison with ‘Fire in the Bush’ (dated the spring of 1650). We have already noted that Winstanley slowly moved away from a mystical interpretation of natural and social phenomena. Now another eighteen months had passed (the end of 1651), and before us we see a man who is not only a rationalist putting reason in the place of faith, but also a

pantheist (and in effect a materialist) in his explanations of the world around him.

Winstanley's pantheism is revealed above all in his understanding of God and ways of cognizing Him. For Winstanley, as we saw earlier, the concept of God is not personal, not a god of 'fleshly imagination', but the *creative principle poured out in creation*. Therefore knowledge of God is, for Winstanley, knowledge of His manifestation in creation, from which it followed that to discover the secrets of nature was to discover God, for God exists within every visible work and body. 'And indeed if you would know spiritual things, it is to know how the spirit or power of wisdom and life, causing motion, or growth, dwells within, and governs both the several bodies of the stars and planets in the heavens above; and the several bodies of the earth below; as grass, plants, fishes, beasts, birds, and mankind; for to reach God beyond the creation, or to know what He will be to a man, after the man is dead ... is a knowledge beyond the line, or capacity of man to attain to while he lives in his compounded body.'<sup>64</sup> So that man should not construct castles in the air, he should concentrate his spiritual efforts on ensuring that his knowledge remains concrete, possible only if the object of cognition remains the creation only, the tangible world around him. Only in this case will God manifest Himself visibly as the being and motion of all that exists, since what is meant is genuine knowledge of Him, which can and must be obtained through experience, *and not through imagination*. Thus to study the motion of things on earth, or the motion of the heavenly bodies, to study the cycle of day and night, winter and summer, cold and heat, growth, etc., is to gain knowledge of God Himself, since in all these cases He is present as the source and life-giving spirit, as the motion. Not surprisingly, that which the servants of the visible (i.e. institutionalized) church meant by the 'heavenly' or 'spiritual' and on understanding which mankind had expended its efforts, was seen by Winstanley as a weapon designed to keep people in darkness and slavery. In the first place, such an understanding of spiritual things reduced the efforts of the mind either to the endless process of interpreting the words of others, or to attempts to foresee the fate of the individual after death. In either case men were following a false trail, and that in two senses: in the first place, the fruitless expenditure of mental effort, and sec-

ondly, the 'truths' acquired along this route blinded men, and left them in the power of darkness, devaluing their practical experience and handing them over into the power of false teachers.

On reading these magnificently composed passages, worthy of the pen of a deist philosopher, it is indeed difficult to believe that this pen was held by that same Winstanley who also signed the pamphlets full of mystic exaltation which appeared in the spring and summer of 1648. There is far less elegance in those parts of 'The Law of Freedom' which reflect the reality of contemporary social life. Taken overall, 'The Law of Freedom' reveals not only the logical weakness of this 'plan' for the building of a new, just society, but also a lack of historical realism in the author's concept both of man as a developing individual and of the society of the day. All social utopias, moreover, orientated themselves on static condition, and it is no coincidence that they proposed measures to prevent future possible changes. We have already commented on the fact that Winstanley was, as a social critic, far in advance of his day, even as regards the most radical trends in the socio-political thinking of the 17th century England. Since Winstanley saw 'freedom' synonymous to universal freedom of access to land (synonymous, therefore, to a ban on the conversion of land, the basic means of livelihood, into private property), the only truly free society, in his eyes, was one in which each individual, regardless of his social rank or estate, was guaranteed free access to and use of the land, which belongs to everyone, and to no one private individual.

In a society dominated by the 'thieving art' of trade and, above all, the purchase and sale of land, there inevitably appears the luxury of a few and the poverty of many—those by whose labour this luxury is created and maintained. 'This is the bondage the poor complain of, that they are kept poor by their brethren in a land where there is so much plenty for every one.'<sup>65</sup> In other words, slavery is inherent in the social conditions which turn large numbers of people into beggars as a result of alienating them from the earth and its fruits, thus depriving them of the opportunity to feed themselves with the fruit of their own labour. The conditions of social injustice and oppression reigning in society and based on private land ownership are, for Winstanley, the explanation of the moral flaws in

men: 'I am assured that if it be rightly searched into, the inward bondages of the minde, as covetousness, pride, hypocrisie, envy, sorrow, fears, desperation, and madness, are all occasioned by the outward bondage, that one sort of people lay upon another.'<sup>66</sup>

It is clear that, under the pen of Winstanley, the idea of 'inherent rights' (following from the theory of natural law) acquired that content which so frightened Ireton, the Independent orator at the Putney conference (October, 1647), namely that every individual born in England has equal right to maintain his life by the fruits he has cultivated with his own hands on land freed from any private ownership, for 'the Earth is a common Treasury'.

However, while Winstanley never tires of emphasizing that the land is the collective property of the people, he almost wholly ignores the question of the form of ownership of agricultural implements. Those researchers who have drawn attention to this are inclined to explain it in terms of Winstanley's narrow economic vision, his ignorance of the nature of social production in the England of the day. It seems to us that the explanation of this 'omission' is to be sought in the still largely traditional character of the society of the day. Agriculture—and not industry—still embodied for contemporaries the production of material goods, and did so to such an extent that even Petty and Locke continued to identify property with landownership, and land rent with a normal form of surplus value. It is therefore not surprising that in Winstanley's eyes also agriculture appeared as the source of all crafts and arts in society. The crafts were simply an extension and completion of the labour of the land cultivator. The horticulturist leads to the wine-maker, the shepherd—to the weaver and tanner, etc. In other words, crafts simply altered the form of the products delivered by the farmer, and the craftsman simply diversified the components of social wealth without increasing their sum, without adding anything to their total. Moreover, as manual labour was still the basis of manufacture, the decisive factor in production, at least in its traditional branches, was still the professional skill and labour of the workman in his workshop, using relatively simple and accessible implements of labour which were still not seen as a form of capital by the society of the period.

Thus 'no man's', or public, ownership of the land and natural resources was the foundation stone in the construction of a free republic. In this republic no one would be able to exercise dominion over another simply because he enjoyed an abundance of those necessary goods of which others were deprived. On this same basis, poverty and hired labour for wages would also end. In his description of the forms of social production, Winstanley is essentially projecting into the future the level of social production which existed in his own day in both agriculture and industry, and not only the level of production but also the forms of its organization, while radically transforming the dominant property relations. Judging overall, Winstanley often clearly reduced the level of such production, turning cottage industry, which was an early capitalist form of production, into a patriarchal craft occupation. This, as has already been noted, revealed a certain primitivism or inadequate understanding of the historical progress of mankind. However, one should not demand of Winstanley that perspicacity which was lacking even a hundred years later in the first proponents of communism, including the greatest and most original among them, Meslier and Morelly, and that when the industrial revolution was already underway. On this question they did not depart very much from Winstanley, and this is explained by the fact that socio-utopian thought at the beginning of the period of bourgeois revolutions was simply a genial anticipation of the *conditions* for freeing mankind from those evils born of private property, and not a more or less logical conclusion drawn from an analysis of the social conditions created by the industrial revolution. As for Winstanley's utopia, although it was addressed not to Cromwell alone but also to posterity, he nonetheless thought of it as a plan for the *immediate* reorganization of society on just principles. Therefore the social conditions of the moment had to serve, and indeed alone could serve, as the starting-point in the description of the practical aspects of this plan.

This plan did not have to answer the question as to precisely how the life of society was to be reorganized on the principles of collectivism and reciprocity in the existing conditions of industrial and agricultural production. This close link between the dream and contemporary reality was conditioned by one of the most characteristic features of Winstanley's utopia, namely *the interweaving of elements*

*of an anti-feudal peasant revolution with elements anticipating an anti-bourgeois social revolution.* This combination, quite 'unnatural' from the point of view of the logic of history, of demands that the land be freed from the power of the lords of the manor, and the summons 'Worke together, eat bread together', brings together in one plan elements belonging essentially to two different historical periods separated by several centuries. Here, however, in England, they came together in time, reflecting the specific features of the 17th century England: a disproportionately large number of plebs on the eve of a bourgeois revolution, combined with the preservation of the feudal dependence of the class of peasant copyholders.

This explains why we find in 'The Law of Freedom' two currents in revolutionary ideology closely woven together: on the one hand, each free man should enjoy free access to the land without paying any rent to any landlord, and on the other hand, 'neither the Earth, nor any fruits thereof, should be bought or sold by the Inhabitants one among another, which is a slavery the Kingly Conquerors have brought in'.<sup>67</sup> Whereas, in the historical reality of the day, such a state of affairs could only repel the tenancy-dependent but economically independent peasant farmers away from the movement of the rural poor (despite the fact that the Digger movement, as we have seen, included in its programme the demand for a peasant revolution), in terms of a draft constitution for a just society, it was so endowed with the concrete features of economic and social life in the England of the day that the reader might easily conclude that it would be sufficient to change the form of ownership, and on this basis the form of distribution, and he would almost immediately find himself in a society of abundance and freedom for all.

It should be pointed out, however, that the striking historical and temporal 'concreteness' of this communist ideal, which distinguishes Winstanley's utopia from the speculative postulates which fill, for example, More's utopia, is not due only to differences in the level of education and scholarship, but is also the result of the pursuit of different aims.

More was writing a humanist philosophical and literary work intended to be meditated upon by some, and to provide an 'interesting' novel for others. Winstanley was, as we have noted earlier, drawing up a 'draft' constitution for

a just society which, should it be approved by Cromwell, was to come into force not in some remote if wonderful future, but there and then, immediately. In other words, he was composing a strictly practical guide to action. What, then, were his main ideas?

The main social cell in 'The Law of Freedom' is the community, termed either the town, or the city, or the parish. The production cell of society was the family, which lives its own life and conducts its own domestic economy. In order to protect his 'plan' from the accusations levelled at the Diggers by their opponents, namely that they were seeking not only to introduce common landownership, but also 'common wives', Winstanley emphasized several times in his utopia that 'Every family shall live apart, as now they do'. If the family was engaged in the cottage industry, its labour for 'the common weal' would be done at home using the necessary raw materials and implements obtained from social stores, and the final product was to be delivered to other (special) shops. 'Every Tradesman,' we read, 'shall fetch Materials, as Leather, Wool, Flax, Corn, and the like, from the publicke Store-houses to work upon without buying and selling; and when particular works are made, as Cloth, Shooes, Hats, and the like, the Tradesmen shall bring these particular works to particular shops, as it is now in practice, without buying and selling. And every family as they want such things as they cannot make, they shall go to these shops, and fetch without money, even as now they fetch with money.'<sup>68</sup>

It is not difficult to perceive that the process of industrial production in the 'ideal society' is literally 'copied' from the organization of such production in the England of the day. We have here a very detailed description of so-called dispersed manufacture in which the worker received from a distribution-point at the beginning of the week the raw material to be worked upon, and at the end of the week delivered the ready-made goods to reception points. However, there was a radical difference between the ideal organization of industrial production as sketched by Winstanley and the practice of the day which he had observed, despite all the *technical* similarity. In capitalist manufacture, the worker worked for the owner of the raw materials and, very often, the owner of the implements of labour (the lathes), receiving for his labour the wages on which he had to subsist and which were barely sufficient to

keep away starvation. In the just society, where the implements of labour and the raw materials are the common property of all the workers, this worker is recompensed by society 'according to his needs'. Purchase and sale is abolished within the communist community, as is also the medium of purchase and sale—money. The worker does not pay for the raw materials he receives to process, nor for the goods necessary to satisfy the needs of his family. The question of the relationship between the measure of work and the measure of consumption remained, of course, an open one in this utopia. What mattered was the principle itself. In Winstanley's imagination at least, no difficulties arose in this respect.

Thus, in the system of distribution described in 'The Law of Freedom', what is being discussed is a system of *direct product exchange*. Insofar as labour is still of a wholly concrete nature, production has only use value. Craftsmen of various professions produce their goods primarily in order to satisfy their own needs, while that which is surplus to their needs is delivered to public shops, where they can obtain all the other necessary goods and implements produced by others. Therefore, by working for all, each is working, in the final analysis, for himself. It is amazing to notice how simple and easy it seemed to Winstanley to make this transition from one social order to another: everything could remain as it was, at least for the time being, provided only that money, that is, purchase and sale, was abolished—and the leap was made. This view reflects one of the manifestations of the then widespread fetish of money—in this case the plebeian version of that fetish: money as the main source of all social ills. Therefore, far from deifying the 'miraculous power of gold', Winstanley abjures it; the abolition of this power seemed to him to be the surest way to the social reorganization of society. Everything will remain as it is now, Winstanley emphasizes, only there will be no more need of money. 'Even as now we have particular trade in Cities and Towns, called Shopkeepers, which shall remaine still as they be, only altered in their receiving in, and delivering out: for whereas by the Law of Kings, or Conquerers, they do receive in and deliver out by buying and selling... Now they shall (by the Laws of the Commonwealth) receive into their Shops, and deliver out againe freely, without buying and selling.'<sup>69</sup> The utopian nature of this point of view is obvious, but it



had a very real underlying basis, and although this process began within medieval society, the full extent of its destructive impact for the patriarchal, essentially subsistence economy of the small-scale producers was revealed only with the emergence of capitalism, when the intensive penetration of money destroyed the traditional way of life for the small-scale economies of the peasant farmer and craftsman: money became the means of the concentration of private property at one end, and its destruction at the other. This social practice seen by Winstanley day in, day out, could not but give rise to the concept that the abolition of money was the real condition of the liberation of the oppressed.

It is surprising to note that, although agriculture remained the occupation of the absolute majority of the population of England in the mid-17th century, the organization of agricultural production is described in less detail in 'The Law of Freedom' than the organization of craft production, and therefore also not very clearly. Very probably this is explained by the fact that not long before Winstanley wrote 'The Law of Freedom' the organizational form of agricultural production had been clearly demonstrated by the Diggers on St George's Hill. We have already said that the smallest and basic production unit in the communist community, the fundamental production unit in 'The Law of Freedom', is the family. As to the question of how this family engages in agricultural production to 'the common weal' — on an individual piece of land (as the worker in the cottage industry is given raw material from the store-house), or on a common field alongside other families — 'The Law of Freedom' offers no direct answer. Indirect references, however, indicate that, although agricultural implements are retained by each family individually, they work together on a common field, to which each family sends a specified number of workers: 'The Earth shall be planted, and the fruits reaped, and carried into Store-houses by common assistance of every Family... Every Family do keep sufficient *working tools* for common use, as *Plows, Carts and furniture*, according as every Family is furnished with men to work therewith.'<sup>70</sup> Finally: 'The Earth is to be planted and the fruits reaped, and carried into Barns and Store-houses by the assistance of every family: And if any man or family want Corn, or other provision, They may go to the Store-houses and

fetch without money: If they want a Horse to ride, go into the fields in Summer, or to the Common Stables in Winter, and receive one from the Keepers, and when your Journey is performed, bring him where you had him, without money.'<sup>71</sup> So we shall not be mistaken if we suppose that the land is cultivated by all the families (the community) working together, and all the produce is stored in common store-houses. The fact that each family receives produce from these store-houses is further confirmation of this supposition.

It should be noted that, alongside nationally produced goods, there also figure in 'The Law of Freedom' products delivered from abroad. These are stored in each town or parish in the so-termed 'general store-houses', from which each family can receive those it requires for its own needs or for its work. Although Winstanley does not specify how these foreign products are acquired, we can probably assume that money is retained solely as a means of international exchange.

It follows, and Winstanley underlines this more than once, that the abolition of money as the means of acquiring the goods necessary for subsistence follows from the *socialization* of the means of production, above all the chief of these—the earth. 'And the reason why all the riches of the earth are a common stock is this, Because the earth, and the labours thereupon, are managed by common assistance of every family, without buying and selling.'<sup>72</sup>

It is worth noting that in 'The Law of Freedom' Winstanley repeatedly emphasizes the fact that the house, the furniture and items of personal use are the personal property of the family, and any encroachment upon them is punishable. 'Yet,' he stresses, 'every mans house is proper to himself, and all the furniture therein, and provision which he hath fetched from the Store-houses is proper to himself.'<sup>73</sup> This includes wife and children. Should someone seek to take his house, furniture, food, wife or children saying that these are common he is therefore violating the law and is to be punished.

Productive labour for the good of society is the duty of every able-bodied member of the family up to the age of forty years. Those who reach this age may continue to work if they wish, or devote themselves to speculative thought, or, if elected by the community, become magis-

trates, beginning with the position of overseer of work and ending with membership of Parliament and the post of minister. An element of patriarchal society is nonetheless retained in this otherwise consistently democratic system of creating the apparatus of social management: the father of the family is included in this system as its prime link, or, more accurately, its foundation.

We have already had occasion to see that Winstanley's system of distributing the means of subsistence among the members of society in this 'ideal state' does not presuppose any restrictions upon consumption. Winstanley does not even envisage a shortage of any products—and that while continuing at the same level of productivity! The total triumph of the communist principle: 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' is yet further proof of this assumption of abundance. It is no coincidence that Winstanley emphasizes that a 'comfortable livelihood' is ensured for each and all. The only concern in this regard expressed in 'The Law of Freedom' is that the head of the family has the duty to ensure that products are not wasted through laying up more than the family is capable of consuming.

In this respect Winstanley's 'ideal society' is in direct contrast to the ideal of the medieval communist sects, far removed from their ascetic 'equality of the poor'. The abundance of material goods, in Winstanley's opinion, will be guaranteed by the very nature of free labour for the common good, and the improvements introduced as a consequence in all the arts and crafts. It should be noted, however, that the nature of human requirements as reflected in 'The Law of Freedom' is still very undeveloped and limited, amounting in effect to the provision of food, clothing and housing. In this Winstanley is a child of his age and, even more, a representative of the plebs, for whom this very minimum was an unattainable dream in the conditions of the England of the day.

Judging by 'The Law of Freedom', Winstanley saw three 'dangers' threatening his 'True Republic': idleness, theft of public property, and violation of the prohibition on exchange using the medium of money. 'If any refuse to learn a trade, or refuse to work in seed-time, or harvest, or refuse to be a Waiter in Store-houses, and yet will feed and clothe himself with other mens labors; The Overseers shall first admonish him privately; if he continue idle, he

shall be reprov'd openly before all the people by the Overseers; and shall be forbore with a moneth after this reproof: If he still continues idle, he shall then by whipt, and be let go at liberty for a moneth longer; if still he continue idle, he shall be, delivered into the taskmasters hand, who shall set him to work for twelve moneths.<sup>74</sup> If such a man is the head of a family, he is removed from the 'ordering of that family', and becomes a *compulsory servant* under the taskmaster until he agrees to take part voluntarily in collective labour.

No less interesting is the law against commerce. 'If any man entice another to buy and sell, and he who is enticed doth not yield, but makes it known to the Overseer; the enticer shall lose his freedom for twelve moneths.'<sup>75</sup> The second man, who was not enticed but made it known, shall be commended by the entire congregation for his loyalty to 'the true republic'.

'He or she who calls the Earth his, and not his brothers, shall be set upon a stool, with those Words written in his forehead, before all the Congregation; and afterwards be made a servant for twelve moneths under the taskmaster.'<sup>76</sup>

If anyone joins a conspiracy or causes a rebellion with the aim of restoring private property, he is to be sentenced to death.

Finally, not only commerce was prohibited, but also hired labour. In short, all civil acts mediated by money were to be declared outlawed. Not surprisingly, gold and silver in Winstanley's 'true republic' have only the same purpose as that of copper, tin and iron, used to make domestic utensils.

Winstanley's utopia also contains a detailed description of the political system. The 'true republic' is founded on the principle of the 'common weal' since, unlike the 1649 republic of the Independents, it guarantees to *all* its citizens the material basis of public freedom. In this state there is not only no room for monarchs, but also none for those whose well-being was founded on royal laws—the lords of the manor, a tithe-collecting clergy, thieving lawyers and bribe-taking officials. It is the duty of authorities at every level to concern themselves with the well-being of every citizen, to cut across any manifestation of selfishness on the principle 'my own weal comes first'. Thanks to this, traditional common law also acquires a new meaning, be-

coming for the first time truly *common* – the same for all. Winstanley's ideal is a social democratic republic. All the magistrates, from the highest to the lowest, are elected and, as 'standing water soon stagnates', they are subject to re-election *every year* so as to ensure the attainment of the purpose of the magistrates, which is to stand guard over the interests of the common good. Among those deprived of the right to vote we find not only supporters of the monarchy, but also – which is curious for the England of the day – those speculating with their confiscated estates. Among those who may be elected as magistrates we find those who themselves suffered under the oppression of the monarchical regime, those who sacrificed their property and risked their life to free the nation from slavery, those who have the courage to declare and confirm the truth, who act justly and hate greed. Whereas the magistrates come from those who have reached the age of forty, there is no age specified for the right to vote. As we have already remarked, the patriarchal features in the organization of the magistrature are revealed in the fact that the father of the family is seen as its basic unit in that magistrature. He is considered elected 'by necessity' with 'the common consent of his children'. In the same way, the parish is also seen as 'one family', headed by the peace-maker and the overseer. The first is not so much a judge as an arbiter between the disputants. The overseer supervises production and consumption. All are elected for one year.

In terms of their functions, they are divided into four categories: 1) those who protect the inviolability of individual family property; 2) those who oversee production (on the professional principle); 3) those who supervise public shops; 4) those who compose the body of public inspectors. If the magistrates of the first three categories are elected for one year, to those of the last category can be added men who have reached the age of sixty. They are to supervise the correct fulfillment of their functions by all official persons. Moreover, there is provision for the parish to have an army representative (known as a 'soldier'), who in time of peace assumes the functions of a policeman. All these together make up the parish council. The county council (the 'court' or 'senate') was to include judges and also all the overseers of the parishes in that county. It was to sit four times a year in the four parts of the county, and function as the judicial inspectorate and

court of appeal. Finally, the supreme magistrates of the country gather in Parliament (which combines legislative, executive and judicial powers). The Leveller concept of the separation of powers exerted no influence on Winstanley as it was incompatible with the principle of undivided 'paternal power'. Thus, for example, the essence of parliamentary power is defined by Winstanley as follows: 'Parliament is the father of the nation', 'Parliament derives from the lower duty in the country, that is, from the power of the father in the family'. Although this 'father' had never, in the past, appeared eager to concern itself about its oppressed 'children', although each new Parliament only confirmed the laws which protected the rich and the strong, leaving untouched the yoke which crushed the poor and the weak, Winstanley hoped that future parliaments—the parliaments of the 'ideal republic' representing the whole country, would move from words and promises to action, and bring freedom to those who still remained oppressed, ensuring them that share of material goods which was theirs according to their birthright.

Insofar as the 'ideal society' was seen by Winstanley as possible in the near future in England, the constitution of the 'ideal republic' includes factors borrowed from actually existing society, and therefore far from ideal. This inconsistency in Winstanley's utopian views has already been referred to above.

The sections of 'The Law of Freedom' devoted to law and legislation are of considerable interest. Winstanley proceeds from the assumption that the people may see themselves as bound by the law only *if they are themselves the source of that law*. This principle is incomparably more democratic than the principle underlying the Leveller's Agreement of the People. Concerned above all to retain for the people the so-called 'inalienable rights', the Levellers in effect gave Parliament the right to legislate at its own discretion in other spheres. 'The Law of Freedom' grants Parliament at most the right to legislative initiative, but in order for any proposed bill to become law it must receive the consent of the people. *The referendum is the decisive and culminating procedure in legislative activity*. Only when a month has passed after the publication of a bill can it be given the force of law. The mandatory nature of the law is upheld by the courts, by the institution of 'social slavery' and, finally, the death penalty. The need for

such measures of compulsion was explained by the simple fact that the members of this 'ideal society' were nonetheless contemporaries of Winstanley himself, people still dominated by the traditional passions of the property owner, passions alien and hostile to the ideal society. As for the institution of social slavery provided for in the 'true republic', this was common to all the utopias of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. The very existence within society of hard and 'unpleasant' labour, seen as humiliating for free citizens, seemed to presuppose the need for a category of people who would do such work on a compulsory basis. Thus the free citizens do the lighter, easier work, and the slaves (social servants)—the hard and unpleasant work (loaders, carters, etc.).

Finally, the free man can, with the agreement of the overseer, request such a social servant for himself, and the servant does not have the right to refuse any kind of work. Such servants wear special identifying clothes made of undyed linen; negligent servants are punished with the whip.

As a rule, such 'social service' lasts for only a year. On the expiry of this period, the judges decide whether or not this particular servant has deserved to be set free. If not, he is given another sentence.

Winstanley's 'republic', however, has no prisons, and its laws are intended to prevent crime rather than punish it. 'If the Laws were few and short,' he writes, 'and often read, it would prevent those Evils; and every one, knowing when they did well, and when ill, would be very cautious of their words and actions.'<sup>77</sup>

The laws relating to lawyers who take money for their services are particularly severe, and provide for only one penalty—death. Mixing once again actual conditions and those pertaining to the social ideal, Winstanley demands equal justice for poor and rich, as if there were still room in his 'true republic' for inequality.

Finally, a comment must be made on the peaceable character of Winstanley's 'republic' despite its possession of armed forces. Within the country, the army defends freedom, outside the country the army of the 'true republic' pursues no expansionist aims, that is, no acquisition of territory by conquest. The aim of the 'republic' is 'to beat swords into ploughshares', for it hopes that the spread of a just social order will be achieved not by physical force, but solely by the light of reason.

The sections in 'The Law of Freedom' which deal with religion and education are of exceptional interest. Here Winstanley appears so bold and original, so close to a rationalist and materialist interpretation of the surrounding world, that it is difficult to believe that only shortly before he had been a mystic.

Winstanley sets against the traditional view that the world is cognized by means of penetration into its divine essence the directly opposite thesis that all true knowledge is achieved by cognition of the material world.

Thus, although Winstanley retained the idea of God the Creator, he so dissolved Him within creation that cognition of creation became the only true object of man's intellectual efforts. Objectively this was a form of atheism, although subjectively Winstanley undoubtedly considered himself a Christian, only totally different from those Christians who professed God only with their lips, while 'nourishing the devil in their hearts'. 'And if a man should go to imagine, what God is beyond the creation ... he doth, as the proverb saith, build castles in the air, or tells us of a world beyond the Moon, and beyond the Sun, meerly to blinde the reason of man.'<sup>78</sup> As we recall, Winstanley was resolutely anti-clerical. The traditional cleric with his speculative knowledge was an object of Winstanley's animosity as the source of all the evils and sufferings on earth. Imaginary knowledge blinded men, obliging them to believe what others had written or said and not trust their own experience. For as long as wile deceivers were in power, society had nothing except verbal assertions and negations, fear, confused ideas and unsolved doubts. However, all these pseudo-scholars instructing others that the use of earthly goods is base and sinful, do not they themselves do all they can to obtain these goods? Why, if they consider themselves to represent the world of glory after death, where the upright man will see the face of God, do they themselves not hasten there, but prefer to delay on earth? Are they not converting the earth into their own paradise? 'Why do you heap up riches? why do you eat and drink, and wear clothes? why do you take a woman, and lie with her to beget children? Are not all these carnal and low things of the Earth? and do you not live in them, and covet them as much as any? nay more than many which you call men of the world?'<sup>79</sup>



It is well known that anti-clericalism was widespread among the masses, with the active support of radical sects during the years of the revolution, and particularly in 1647-1649. However, it often took the form of argument among differing religious sects.

Winstanley's anti-clericalism was the manifestation of revolutionary enlightenment, the aim of which was to free the spirit of the masses so that their mental vision should see the chains which bound that spirit, the bonds of earthly slavery and the true secrets of nature. Winstanley not only denied such Christian doctrines as the immortality of the soul, heaven and hell, but also ridiculed those who taught self-denial and asceticism. He rose to a height unparalleled for his time and saw the class basis of the morality of self-restraint, and all theology in general. 'This Doctrine is made a cloke of policy by the subtil elder Brother, to cheat his simple younger Brother of the Freedoms of the Earth: For saith the elder Brother, *The earth is mine, and not yours, Brother; and you must not work upon it, unless you will hire it of me: and you must not take the fruits of it, unless you will buy them of me by that which I pay you for your Labor: for if you should do otherwise, God will not love you, and you shall not go to Heaven when you dye, but the Devil will have you and you must be damned in Hell.* If the younger reply, and say, *The Earth is my Birth-Right, as well as yours, and God who made us both, is no Respector of persons: Therefore is no Reason but I should enjoy the Freedoms of the Earth for my comfortable Livelihood, as well as you, Brother*', the elder brother finds another argument in religion: 'You must not trust to your own reason and Understanding, but you must believe what is written and what is told you ... will you be an Atheist, and a factions man, will you not believe God?'

'I cannot beleieve, saith the younger Brother, that our righteous Creator should be so partial in his Dispensations of the Earth, seeing our bodies cannot live upon Earth without the use of the Earth'.<sup>80</sup>

However, Winstanley not only revealed the social function of religion in a class-based society, but also spoke in 'The Law of Freedom' as a rationalist enlightener. Those who preach imaginary knowledge deprive people of the useful knowledge they need to increase their power over the world of nature, which is the only way to increase earthly goods. Setting a system of useful knowledge—the

knowledge of nature — against blind faith, Winstanley, like Bacon, defended not only the idea of scientific progress, but also the link between this and a just social system. Only in a just society will human talents be able to develop. If the earth is freed from 'Kingly Bondage' (that is, from private property), and each is provided with the means of subsistence, then 'many secrets of God, and His work in Nature, would be made publike'. 'Then will *knowledge cover the Earth, as the waters cover the Seas*.'<sup>81</sup>

Winstanley's call for a study of nature rather than imaginary knowledge is so similar to the leitmotif running through the philosophy of Bacon that the question of whether Winstanley knew Bacon's works, by hearsay or by reading them, is a question which cannot but interest the researcher. Unfortunately, the answer is likely to remain supposition.

Not surprisingly, in the 'true republic' the role of the parish preachers undergoes a radical change. From pseudo-experts of the world beyond, they become disseminators of genuine knowledge about this world. Only in this role do they receive their share of common wealth along with everyone else. Elected for a year, the parish preachers carry out their educational duties on the Sabbath, when the congregation comes together. First information is read out about the most important events in the country, distributed weekly by the Postmaster of the republic in the form of printed publications. Then the laws are read out, knowledge of which should convince all of their justice in preventing criminal actions. Then the congregation listens to speeches on the *history of governments and peoples* (so they should all appreciate the blessings of freedom), and on various questions of physics, astrology, astronomy, navigation, agriculture and, finally, ethics. Such speeches should be delivered not only by the preachers. Anyone who wishes to give the congregation any useful information about the nature of the skies and the earth, about herbs and plants, may also speak at Sabbath meetings. Thanks to this, people will learn about the secrets of nature and creation, and their power over them will increase, this being the only way to achieve abundance and happiness on earth.

The fifth chapter in 'The Law of Freedom' is devoted to the education of children and youths, and is entitled 'Education of mankind, in Schools and Trades'. Although the

patriarchal outlook referred to earlier is still apparent in the approach to these issues—suffice it to say that the father of the family is recognized as the main instructor of his child not only as regards behaviour, but also in the rudiments of science and the crafts—nonetheless many of the pedagogical views of Winstanley anticipate the future system of education in the ‘republic’—universal, equal, compulsory and, at the same time, free in terms of the choice of profession.

Decisively rejecting the abstraction of contemporary scholarship, its divorce from life and blind reverence for old authorities, Winstanley contrasts this with knowledge based on experience. ‘Every one who speaks of any Herb, Plant, Art, or Nature of Mankind, is required to speak nothing by imagination, but what he hath found out by his own industry and observation in tryal.’<sup>82</sup>

He considered the experience of working men to be an inexhaustible source of useful knowledge. It comes, therefore, as no surprise to discover that he saw in agriculture, mining, stock-breeding, forestry and navigation the ‘five Fountains from whence all Arts and Sciences have their influences’.<sup>83</sup> ‘He that is an actor in any or in all the five parts, is a profitable son of mankinde; he that onely contemplates and talks of what he reads and hears, and doth not employ his Talent in some bodily action, for the encrease of fruitfulness, freedom, and peace in the Earth, is an unprofitable Son.’<sup>84</sup> In other words, Winstanley saw productive labour as the basic requisite for progress, including in science. About forestry, for example, he wrote: ‘And here all Carpenters, Joyners, Throsters ... and all who work in wood and timber, may finde out the Secret of Nature, to make Trees more plentiful and thriving in their growth, and profitable for use.’<sup>85</sup> So also in all the other branches of the economy the task of scientific discovery lies first of all with the workers who are occupied in that branch. Not for nothing did Winstanley name the new science as ‘labouring knowledge’, in contrast to ‘book learning’. He repeatedly emphasized the practical purpose of education and science in general, which lies in using its discoveries for the good of society. To the question of what men should study, he answered that they should occupy themselves ‘in every Trade, Art, and Science, whereby they may finde out the Secrets of the Creation, and that they may know how to govern the Earth in right order’.<sup>86</sup>

If experience lies at the basis of all knowledge, if the criterion of the truth is practice, would it not be right to conclude that only productive labour is the foundation of useful knowledge? Who knows better the behaviour of the forces of nature than those who act upon them by their labour? Winstanley is speaking, however, of the labour of free members of a justly ordered society: 'When men are sure of food and raiment, their reason will be ripe, and ready to dive into the secrets of the Creation ... for fear of want, and care to pay Rent to Task-masters, has hindered many rare inventions.'<sup>87</sup>

Finally, in a course of education for children Winstanley also included a study of foreign languages and 'the history of former ages'.

After the children have 'strengthened their reason' at school under the guidance of teachers, they move on, depending on their inclinations, to some apprenticeship where their training is supervised not only by a craftsman, but also an inspector in the given profession. Not only boys but also girls receive an education, and alongside elementary literacy, numeracy and music, the girls study dress-making, spinning, knitting and other skills.

The 'republic' encourages young workers to look for new methods of work, supports their inventions and scientific discoveries, and honours them. Titles of honour are accorded to citizens either on attaining a certain age, or for some discovery they have made regardless of their age.

Such are the main features of Winstanley's 'The Law of Freedom' — an amazing communist utopia created in the course of the 17th century revolution as a result of the social experience and imagination of a man who belonged to the English commoners.

To conclude this brief review of the main ideas contained in 'The Law of Freedom', it should be noted that, for Winstanley, it was not a question of installing in England a new social order hitherto unknown to that country. On the contrary, as is shown by the subtitle of this pamphlet, 'True Magistracy Restored', Winstanley saw the just social order he was describing as the restoration of an order which had once existed in England at the dawn of her history, but which was then destroyed by the Norman conquest. As we know, this was a myth widely believed during the years of the revolution, and one to which many ideologists and politicians of various classes and social

strata in the parliamentary camp resorted. Only Winstanley, however, used it to vindicate the communist ideal of the plebs, and the fact that the arguments for its achievement in the England of the mid-17th century were not conclusions drawn from abstract reason and ethic but based on 'history', links it to the medieval aspirations of the oppressed for that 'truth' and 'justice' which had supposedly reigned among men in the past, and which had then been lost as a result of the 'fall' or 'evil fate'. Thus did historical reality and historical myth, mysticism and naturalist rationalism, imagination and profound social analysis become interwoven.

Finally there remains just one question: what was the subsequent fate of Winstanley, this amazing son of the English people? Unfortunately, very little information on this topic is possessed by contemporary historical science, and what is known, moreover, is very contradictory.

Let us look first at the information which is seen as more or less reliable. After the publication of 'The Law of Freedom', Winstanley lived another 24 years, during which he ceased all public activity and wrote no more pamphlets. It would seem that he became deeply disillusioned as regards the possibility of establishing a just order on earth by 'independent', secular effort, and this brought him close to the Quakers. Indeed, after the 17th century, Winstanley was often referred to as the founder (or one of the founders) of the Quaker movement. Although such arguments merely reflect the degree to which the differences between Winstanley's views and those of the early Quakers were ignored, it remains a fact that Winstanley's association with 'The Society of Friends' is attested, if nothing else, by his Quaker funeral, supported by written record. Finally, all those who have investigated this question are agreed that in the 1660's the material conditions of Winstanley's life changed for the better, which testifies to some degree to his 'reconciliation' with the existing order—if not in terms of internal conviction, then at least in terms of occupation and way of life. At this point, however, the differences of opinion begin. In some cases Gerard Winstanley is identified with a certain man with this name and surname who lived in the parish of Cobham during the 1660's and the early 1670's. Between 1659 and 1668 this Winstanley occupied various parish posts, and in 1671-1672 was one of the two chief constables in the Elm-

bridge hundred. The second version is based on the last will and testament of William King, father of Susan King, first wife of Winstanley, and written in 1664, and also on the record of a lawsuit begun by a certain Gerrard Winstanley in the Chancery Court, but not pursued to its conclusion due to the death of the plaintiff in 1676. According to this version, the very presence of Winstanley in Cobham was explained by the fact that William King, Winstanley's father-in-law, possessed a small piece of land in the district. Certainly, from 1657 onwards, the use of this land was transferred to Winstanley and his wife, on the condition that the revenue from it would go to William King and his wife. Nonetheless, the financial position of Winstanley improved sufficiently for him to be termed a 'gentleman' in 1660. In 1664, this piece of land owned by King was transferred under his will to Winstanley. Moreover, it is thought that Winstanley had by then become a widower (no record of the death of his wife, Susan, has been found), and married Elizabeth Stanley, by whom he had two sons, Gerrard and Clement. In the record of the death of this Winstanley, he is described as a grain merchant living in London (the parish of St Giles in the Fields). Consequently, Winstanley must have left Cobham around 1664 and moved to London. What is there in this version which raises doubts? In the first place, the age of the Winstanley listed in the funeral record of the Quakers is 62 years, whereas the Winstanley of the Diggers was 67 in 1676. Secondly, there is no documentary evidence of the death of Winstanley's first wife and his second marriage to Elizabeth Stanley. It is possible that there are two Gerrard Winstanleys, as it is also possible that we have simply different periods in the life of one and the same individual. Whatever the case may be, in both versions Winstanley figures as a relatively prosperous man, regardless of whether we see him as one of the chief constables of the Elmbridge hundred, or as a grain merchant in London.

Finally, it should be noted that the works of Winstanley, and particularly 'The Law of Freedom', did not vanish without trace in the history of English social thought. It seems highly probable that he influenced the co-operative utopias of William Cowell ('Declaration to Parliament', 1659) and Piotr Cornelisz Plockhoy ('A Way Propounded to Make the Poor in These and Other Nations Happy', 1659). There are also grounds for believing that the essays

of Winstanley were known and read in the 18th century. It has been established, for example, that a copy of 'The Law of Freedom' was given to Henry Fielding.

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Among the thinkers and active figures in the English revolution of the mid-17th century, Winstanley is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable and colourful. Despite the mystic phraseology which sometimes may prove misleading, he sought *from the very start* to elaborate a system of social ideology for the most deprived section of the masses in his country in his own day. He achieved the summit of his thinking in 'The Law of Freedom', a plan for a social utopia based on the principles of collective property and joint labour. In this sense, as was remarked by the English Marxist historian, Christopher Hill, Winstanley was the only one of the radicals at the time of the revolution to prove a worthy opponent of those defending an order based on private property. He devised a social system founded on the conviction that there exists a primal, inherent love in men for their fellows, and that it can be preserved.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*. With an appendix of documents relating to the Digger Movement. Ed. by George H. Sabine, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1941, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1940, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', *Past and Present*, Supplement No 5, 1978, p. 192.

<sup>4</sup>T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1979, p. 217.

<sup>5</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 243.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger*, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup>Cited from: T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger*, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Christopher Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', p. 190.

<sup>12</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 96.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108.

- <sup>14</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 136.
- <sup>15</sup>T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger*, p. 86.
- <sup>16</sup>Lewis H. Berens, *The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth as Revealed in the Writings of Gerrard Winstanley*, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., London, 1906, p. 60.
- <sup>17</sup>Christopher Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', p. 189.
- <sup>18</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 145.
- <sup>19</sup>Christopher Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', p. 191.
- <sup>20</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 190.
- <sup>21</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 147.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 140.
- <sup>23</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 212.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 214.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 187.
- <sup>26</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 145.
- <sup>27</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, pp. 208-209.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 184.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.
- <sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 194.
- <sup>34</sup>Lewis H. Berens, *The Digger Movement...*, pp. 34-35.
- <sup>35</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 162.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.
- <sup>37</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, pp. 276, 265.
- <sup>38</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 164.
- <sup>39</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 257.
- <sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 255.
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 260.
- <sup>42</sup>David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 165.
- <sup>43</sup>*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, pp. 269-270.
- <sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281.
- <sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 284.
- <sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 287.
- <sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 180.
- <sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 308.
- <sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 282.
- <sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 411-412.



- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 362-363.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 361.
- <sup>53</sup> David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*, p. 174.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 174-175.
- <sup>55</sup> *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 420.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 348.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 472.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 510.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 502.
- <sup>60</sup> Cited from: T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger*, p. 217.
- <sup>61</sup> *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley...*, p. 502.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 511.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 511, 155.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 565.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 558.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 520.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 526.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 584.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 515, 550.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 581.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 527.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 593.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 594.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 595.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 590.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 565.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 566.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 568-569.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 564.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 577.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 578.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 577.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 580.

## Conclusion

Social revolutions are the locomotives of history, and they are driven by the energy of popular uprising. This truth was visibly confirmed by the English revolution of the mid-17th century. In the civil war unleashed by Charles I and his supporters, the Royalists, it was mainly peasants and craftsmen wearing soldiers' uniforms who fought on the parliamentary side. *Such was the main historical form of the popular uprising in this country*, headed by an alliance of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois aristocracy.

The English revolution of the mid-17th century is a landmark in the emergence of a new, capitalist social formation at the world historical level. It is a great mistake to confine it to a national framework, since from the moment when the crisis of the old order became a European crisis, each seemingly national revolution was *in fact resolving a European task*.

The events in England summarized, illumined and revealed the true meaning of an entire stage in the European transition from feudalism to capitalism. *This revolution opened a new and higher phase in an inter-formational transition—the phase of capitalist manufacture in Europe as a whole. It revealed the pattern of European*, and thus also of *world social development*.

This approach to an analysis of the events in England in the 1640's, an approach characteristic of Marxist historiography, has made it possible to take a new look at the historical role played during these years by prominent figures in this revolution. This is essentially what distinguishes a historical portrait from a historical biography, for a his-

torical portrait of such individuals is based above all on *material related to that period of their lives during which they appear on the scene of their national history and play their part in the history of their people*. In other words, the portrait of a figure in a social revolution is *determined above all by his role during the revolution itself, by the degree of his influence upon its development, his vision of its ultimate goals*. However, if this is the case, then the cognitive prism through which such a portrait is drawn can only be a revolution, for this makes it possible to move from the actions of an individual to the movement of the classes and social strata who make up the revolutionary camp.

We have illustrated this approach using prominent figures of the English revolution chosen as clear representatives of *three basic types of revolutionary thinking* characteristic of the early bourgeois revolutions of the 16th-17th centuries. In periods of social revolutions the course of history is massively accelerated, and the life of society becomes extraordinarily rich in content as previously concealed contradictions come into the open. It is not surprising that in such unusual times there should appear on the historical scene people whose natural talents would, in other circumstances, have departed with them, unknown not only to the world, but even to themselves. In other words, unusual times need unusual people, and they appear on the stage of history. As for the social circles which produce them, this proves time and again to be the biblical 'but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He might confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong' (I Corinth, I, 27). The specific features of an early bourgeois revolution also determined the features characteristic of those who played their part in it: their strengths and their weaknesses, the correlation of utopianism and realism in their aspirations—in short, the degree of their understanding of the meaning of events and the measures necessary to turn them in that direction which, from their point of view, was the only one which would lead to the achievement of the desired goal.

For all the specific features of their character, natural inclinations and talents, and for all the differences in their individual lives, the aspirations of each of these three men revealed with amazing clarity the social and political experience of that social stratum which he represented, up

to and including the language in which that experience was expressed, not to mention the forms in which it manifested itself in social practice. Oliver Cromwell and Gerrard Winstanley, the rural squire and the rural commoner, were distinguished by the degree of realism which formed their *understanding of the events* taking place in England in the 1640's. In the practical conclusions which followed from the common understanding of the essence of things Cromwell again remained a profound realist, proceeding on the basis of existing reality, while Winstanley manifested a profound utopianism which resulted from aspirations in advance of that existing reality. As for John Lilburne, he was marked as a petty-bourgeois revolutionary by excessive faith in the transforming power of the declared word and a rather shallow understanding of the political realities, resulting in a rather naive concept of the ways in which the desired goal could be achieved. Seen in their historical perspective, the political thinking of the Levelers, as also the social thinking of the True Levellers, illuminated the path into the future—and not only for their own people—by moving centuries ahead of the actual motion of the wheel of history. Cromwell, on the other hand, was *wholly rooted in the present* as regards his political activity, shaping that present out of the existing material in the likeness of the crude, everyday practice of his own class, and using in the process the political immaturity of all those who, by means of heroic effort, sought to leap beyond that present but could not find the necessary practical means. The strength of Cromwell lay in the strength of his class, which secured for itself political dominance in the revolutionary camp during the entire period of revolutionary development. Finding himself politically on the left flank of that class, Cromwell was able to resolve the most difficult problem facing the revolution—taking the revolution through to its culmination, that is, accepting, under pressure from below and against his own personal convictions, the execution of the King and the abolition of the monarchical order. Thus he *played in the English revolution the role of Robespierre* in the French revolution, a role which, in the more mature revolutionary conditions of the end of the 18th century, was possible only for a representative of petty-bourgeois democracy. In this Cromwell displayed immense will-power and political skill. However, if these talents were placed in one way or another in

the service of the revolution up to that point, thereafter they were used for *purely defensive*, conservative purposes within the country, and for expansionist purposes beyond it. Beginning from the spring of 1649, the role of Cromwell altered radically. He became *the Napoleon of the English revolution*, and it was only force of circumstances which caused him to stop short of placing the royal crown upon his own head.

Only the enormously greater political experience and skill enjoyed by the allied classes in comparison with the popular masses explains the one-sided nature of the culmination of this revolution. It ended exclusively to the advantage of these classes, and they were indebted above all to Cromwell for this course of events. However, two centuries had to pass before they realized this fact and placed his name among the immortals.

The truly heroic, chivalrous struggle waged by John Lilburne was also full of contradictions. He fought under the banner of freedom and the equality of all the sons of England, regardless of their social and property status. However, the fact that he argued an ideal of democracy which anticipated the distant future on the basis of the remote past and an archaic feudal judicial tradition, fully reveals the political immaturity of those social forces in whose name he spoke. Further proof of this immaturity is the fact that, at the very height of their political influence (the autumn of 1648), Lilburne and his associates entrusted to Cromwell and his entourage the fate of the 'Agreement of the People', a move which had tragic consequences for the fate of the Leveller movement. Having been a prisoner in royal jails, Lilburne also spent a large part of the revolutionary years in prison as 'a dangerous enemy' of the new masters of the nation. His ideas, however, which he defended at the cost of his life, did not prove barren. They entered the store-house of liberation philosophy from which people drew resources during their fight for freedom in Europe and America.

We know very little about Gerrard Winstanley the man, but almost everything about him as a thinker, and what we know amazes us with the unexpected depth of his historical insight in defining the essence of the main social conflict within the revolutionary camp following the execution of the King. No historian or thinker before him, or for two centuries after him—until Marx and En-

gels—had anything more profound or penetrating to say about the events of the 1640's. He had had to go down into the very depths of the life of the most deprived section of the masses in order to rise so far above the scholarship of his day. Winstanley's teaching, however, was also not without its profound contradiction. How, in fact, could it be possible to combine the socialist ideal of the rural workers, which involved the abolition of private property and the conversion of all material goods into common wealth, with the demand of the small-scale peasant farmers, who sought the liberation of their property from feudal dues and obligations. In other words, the fact that it was only in England that the plebs proved capable of raising the banner of an anti-feudal agrarian revolution proved to be the sign not of the strength of that revolution, but of its fatal weakness. The aims pursued by the rural workers in this revolution could *only repel the mass of the peasantry away from taking action under the banner raised by Winstanley*. If an alliance with the bourgeoisie held out to the peasantry the promise of legal recognition of their ownership of their land, an alliance with the plebs threatened the very existence of private property. In this contradiction lay the tragedy of both the rural plebs and the peasant farmers in this revolution. In this lay the tragic pathos of Winstanley's enterprise on St George's Hill. However, this contradiction was objectively inevitable, though Winstanley proved unable to see it.

The name of Winstanley is not yet to be found inscribed on the marble plaques of English monuments. However, on the instructions of Lenin it was inscribed on a stele close to the Moscow Kremlin, alongside the names of the greatest thinkers of mankind whose memory is honoured in the Soviet Union.

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## Man Through the Ages



Mikhail Abramovich Barg is a well-known Soviet historian whose particular field of study is the social and economic history of Great Britain (medieval and early modern), and also the history of ideas and the theoretical problems of world history.

Barg has written a large number of historical monographs, including: *Studies in the History of English Feudalism in the 11th-13th Centuries*; *The Lower Orders in the English Revolution of the 17th Century*; *Problems of Social History in Medieval Europe*; *The Rise of Historicism*; *Shakespeare and History*, and others.

ISBN 5-01-002008-4

Progress Publishers